

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



Zion, Illinois

A coincidence, or did the Hand of God touch this midwestern town?

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaeihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

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AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

Muslims who believe in the Messiah, Hazrat
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Qadiani^{AS}



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 60, (As Saff), Verses 9:10

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ
نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ
رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَى
الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

[61:9] They desire to extinguish the light of Allah with the breath of their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, even if the disbelievers hate it.

[61:10] He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, even if those who associate partners with God hate it.

In the Words of the Promised Messiah

The second time when the soul of Jesus was agitated was when the Christians completely assumed the qualities of the Antichrist, and, as predicted, the Antichrist would lay claim to both prophethood and Godhood. This is exactly what these people did. They claimed prophethood by interfering with the divine word and framing regulations and carrying out changes that were the functions of a prophet.

They established what they wished, and invented doctrines and modes of worship and intervened so freely as if they had been commanded to do so by divine revelation. Such unwarranted interference with divine scriptures amount to claiming prophethood. And they claimed Godhead in the sense that their philosophers and thinkers designed to assume all the functions of Godhead.

Their plans testify to their intents. For instance they are planning night and day to bring down the rain on their own, and control births by conveying the male sperm by means of some instrument to the womb of a woman. They believe that divine decree has no meaning, and assert that it is only the failure of a project by some mistake which is taken to as divine decree.

They think that whatever is attributed to God Almighty is because previously the natural causation of everything had not been discovered and man's extreme frustration was named



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

God or God's decree. According to them, when the system of physical causation is completely understood these 'false' notions would automatically disappear.... Thus, in this age the soul of Jesus was agitated a second time and longed for his substitute to appear in the world.

When this desire reached its climax, God Almighty raised one who was his spiritual reflection to defeat the Antichrist of this age. That substitute is called the Promised Messiah, inasmuch as the reality of the Messiah is incarnated in him, i.e., the reality of the Messiah was united with him and he appeared in consequence of the demand of the soul of Jesus^{as}.

That reality is reflected in him like a reflection in a mirror. As he has appeared in consequence of the agitation of the soul of Jesus, he has been named after him. The soul of Jesus desired from the All-Powerful God someone in his own image to come down on earth, who should be invested with

the reality of the Messiah; this is exactly what happened.

This also explains why the Messiah was chosen for this purpose instead of Moses^{as}, Abraham^{as} or David^{as}. On account of the current troubles, it was only the advent of the Messiah that was called for. It was his people who had been corrupted and among whom the qualities of the Antichrist had spread. Therefore, it was only proper that the soul of Jesus should have been agitated. This is the subtle spiritual comprehension that has been bestowed upon me through a vision. It has also been disclosed to me that, after a time of piety and purity and the supremacy of divine unity, the world will again return to polytheism and transgression. Some will devour others like insects, ignorance will prevail, Jesus^{as} will be worshipped once again, and the error of creature-worship will be widespread. All this mischief will proceed out of Christianity in the last part of these latter days. Then again the soul of Jesus^{as} will be greatly troubled and will seek its descent in a majestic form. Then, with the advent of an awe-striking semblance of his, this age will come to an end. That will be the end and the expanse of the world will be rolled up. This shows that on account of the unworthy behavior of the followers of Jesus^{as}, it had been decreed that the spirituality of Jesus^{as} should descend into the world three times.

[A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 5, pp. 341-346]

Editorial

Getting a handle on Messiah prophecies and the truth

The 19th century introduced itself as a time of tremendous change. Science stretched the horizons of human imagination and potential, bringing the world within reach. Global interaction took on a pace never before seen. Western nations competed with each other for colonial conquests, after which they found themselves in the forefront of an intellectual battlefield with their newfound subjects. Religious, intellectual and cultural exchanges were as enriching as they were enraging. A philosophical survival of the fittest took place as the West and East interchangeably played the roles of predator and prey. This struggle continues today.

In the religious arena, in accordance with the prophecies of the Bible and the Holy Qur'an, Christians and Muslims (Sunni and Shi'a) were awaiting the appearance of the Messiah. According to their scholars all signs regarding the latter days had been fulfilled and the Messiah was to appear at any moment. Many organizations were established to prepare the faith-

ful for his appearance so they could accept him and join him for the deliverance of mankind. One notable organization named Jehovah's Witnesses survived and is still established in many countries.

In British India there were close to one hundred thousand Christian missionaries propagating and converting Muslims to Christianity with the full support of the British Empire. It is hard to imagine a hundred years later how powerful the Empire was as it was spread all over the world and "the sun did not set on the British Empire".

In America, John Alexander Dowie established the City of Zion in Illinois which was to become the seat of Christianity. He announced that he was like Elijah preparing for Jesus' appearance and the final victory of Christianity.

It was in these inspirational times that the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community announced that he was the fulfillment of the Second Coming of the Messiah. He announced that Jesus^{as} would not be returning to this world in his physical body, because he died a natural death and is buried in Kashmir, India.

A hundred years later after this announcement, the Zion City of Dr. Dowie is nothing but a small suburb of Chicago with no recognition of its founder. The British Empire dwindled down to the small island from which it expanded in the 19th century. The Czar of Russia is no more and the Kaiser of Germany, who was a champion of Christianity, was dethroned. The Chris-

tian missionaries saw the failure of their mission, not only in India but in Africa and in many other parts of the world.

Muslim and Christian scholars continue to claim that the signs of the latter days have been fulfilled. What needs to be noted is, the prophecies indicated that with the fulfillment of the latter day signs, we would know that Jesus^{as} has already appeared; it is not that the signs would appear and we would still be waiting for the appearance of the Messiah.

As the New Testament declared, the Messiah appeared "as a thief in the night" and only a few "select" recognized him who were eagerly waiting for the "Bridegroom of the Scriptures". Quite a few books have been written since the 19th century by European Christian scholars about Jesus' travel to Kashmir after the incident of the crucifixion. It seems that the hope of Jesus^{as} physically descending is diminishing at a rapid pace.

It is the duty of every Muslim and Christian to look into the claim of the Messiah of the time, so they can recognize him and accept him for the establishment of lasting peace in the world, in accordance with the prophecies.

In the current issue, we have presented some of the changes that took place since the 19th century. It is our hope and prayer that readers would acquire some insight and investigate further to join the blessed mission of the Second Messiah, if nothing else, for the establishment of peace on earth.



Summary of Friday Sermon Delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{at}, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, March 5, 2010

People of Divine communities have the same responsibilities as the Prophets of God who establish them, i.e., summon people to God and having pointed out misleading thoughts and practices that get set in with the passage of time, show them the way of truth. History of religion tells us that each time followers of a Prophet of God did this they received overwhelming opposition, especially at the time when they were small in number.

Today, the believers should respond in the very same manner. Today the followers of the Promised Messiah^{as} respond in the same vein when efforts are made to scare them. True believers are not frightened of the scare-mongering of any group, any legislative body or any organization.

Pharaoh-like people tried their best to obliterate Prophets of God and their followers. This happened with each religion as long as they stayed firm on the original message. Likewise, the Holy Prophet^{saw} was treated in similar manner although he was the most beloved of God. The troubles, difficulties, wars etc. that he had to endure were indeed more than the earlier Prophets. However, his steadfastness was resolute and he inculcated this spirit in his Companions as well. Lack of numbers and weapons etc. did not ever shake the resoluteness of his Companions.

The Holy Qur'an states: 'As to those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger after they had received an injury — such of them as do good and act righteously shall have a great reward; (3:173)

Those to whom men said, 'People have mustered against you, therefore fear them,' but this only increased their faith, and they said, 'Sufficient for us is Allah, and an excellent Guardian is He.' (3:174). This strength of faith and spirit to sacrifice one's life in the cause of God can be seen in the account of the Battle of Uhud. Due to the error of a small group of Muslims, a battle that had been clearly won was turned around and the pagans of Makkah attacked once again incurring heavy loss on the Muslim side. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) lost his blessed tooth but the Companions gathered around him in a manner that no force could move them and each attack of the enemy met with failure. The pagans of Makkah appeared to have the upper hand, although not in the militarily. The Arabs taunted them that they had imagined to retaliate for Badr, but what sort of a victory was this where there was neither any bounty of war nor any prisoners. This incited the pagan to return to the battlefield and attack the battle-weary and injured Muslims. The Holy

Prophet^{saw} got wind of this. He gathered the Companions and prepared to chase the pagans but said that only those would participate who had been to Uhud.

Imagine the weary and the injured Companions, 250 of them set out with the passion of a victorious army. When they encamped the Holy Prophet^{saw} ordered that fire be lit in 500 spots. It was a most impressive sight from distance. The pagans of Makkah thought it better to go back. The Muslims too returned after a stay of two three days, God's awe having struck the pagans. It is significant to note that on return from Uhud Abu Sufyan had declared and challenged that they would fight the Muslims at Badr one more time. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) accepted this challenge.

In 4 Hijra the Muslims prepared an army of 1500 while Abu Sufyan prepared an army of 2000. His spies had informed him about the numbers of Muslims and he was secretly perturbed that their number was not large enough. He sent a man to Medina to scare the Muslims into believing that a very large Makkah army was on its way.

However, God states such propaganda by the enemy actually enhances Muslims in faith. Their reply was and always is: 'Sufficient for us is Allah, and an excellent Guardian is He.' The 1500 Muslims reached Badr but the pagans of Makkah went back from a little outside Makkah. They said it had been a famine year and their preparation was not adequate, they would come the year after. Death had scared the pagans off whereas it enhances believers in faith. Hudhur said the history of Islam is full of incidents where the scare-mongering of the enemy did not work.

Today, the believers should respond in the very same manner. Today the followers of the Promised Messiah^{as} respond in the same vein when efforts are made to scare them. True believers are not frightened of

the scare-mongering of any group, any legislative body or any organisation. They are always steadfast and firm on faith. They are beaten up, abused and their lives are taken, but they are never in awe of anyone save God, their response is always: 'Sufficient for us is Allah, and an excellent Guardian is He.'

The more the enemy tries the more they turn to their Lord. Hudhur said today there is great opposition towards our community in some countries. This, in fact is a testimony of its truthfulness. In their opposition all the 72 sects of Islam have tried their utmost in Pakistan but have not been able to harm Ahmadis, indeed, they cannot harm them. Apparent loss is nothing for a true believer, the real thing is faith.

Hudhur said he receives letters from parents and families of the martyred Ahmadis expressing a greater and enhanced spirit of faith and sincerity. Now, opposition is growing in parts of India as well and the situation in Bangladesh too continues to be adverse at any given opportunity. In some Arab countries, be it Syria or Egypt, situation is similar as it is in Bulgaria and some ex-Soviet states where the Muftis pressurise our community. Opposition of the community of the Promised Messiah^{as} in different parts of the world confirms its global significance. Those who appreciate and understand the Divine attribute of Al Hasib (the Reckoner) will always respond that no matter how much opposition there is, their reply is: 'Sufficient for us is Allah, and an excellent Guardian is He.' This is what we have learned from the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

The Promised Messiah^{as} said, 'These verses illustrate that true courage derives from steadfastness. To be steadfast against every personal passion or against any calamity that attacks like an enemy and not to run away out of cowardice is true courage.' (The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam' p. 77). Hudhur explained that the Promised Messiah^{as} unfolds a different perspective for us here, that aside from apparent enemy, passions of the self can also be aggressive like an enemy. To overcome passions of the self also enables one to contend with apparent enemy. Therefore one has to submit oneself completely to God and it is then that one experiences the manifestations of the Divine attribute of Al Hasib (the Reckoner) beyond one's imagination.

The Promised Messiah^{as} also said that

joining his community entailed following it's teaching in the face of all opposition. He said that the Holy Prophet^ﷺ and his Companions faced bitter persecution for 13 years but eventually all the enemies were obliterated. God has willed that this community too will spread in the world and when it will gain in numbers, the opponents will be silenced. God wills to give training of patience through these circumstances. He wrote that many who used to be abusive repented and took bai'at. Patience is also a kind of worship and has countless blessings. Pain strengthens faith.

Hudhur said he has chosen two subjects with reference to the Divine attribute of Al Hasib (the Reckoner) for today's Sermon. One was to elucidate that the strength of true believers' faith and their steadfastness enables them to face opposition. It is a source of attaining nearness to God and gives them an insight and perception that God is Sufficient for them. Next Hudhur cited verses 41 and 42 of Surah Al Rad and explained that the objectives of Prophets of God and their followers is to take the message of truth to people whether people accept it or not. The consequences of them not accepting is in God's hands, Who is Al Hasib (the Reckoner). Verse 41 states: 'And whether We make thee see the fulfilment of some of the things with which We threaten them or whether We make thee die, it makes little difference, for on thee lies only the delivery of the Message, and on Us the reckoning. (13:41)

Do they not see that We are visiting the land, reducing it from its outlying borders? And Allah judges; there is none to reverse His judgment. And He is swift at reckoning. (13:42). Hudhur explained that God has His own way of chastisement and knows well when to punish whom. It is not essential for Him to implement prompt chastisement. Chastisement can be a sign and its objective is reformation. It is in God's knowledge who will desist in their opposition of Prophet of God and will be reformed and who will reform after slight punishment and who will never desist. It is these people who are chastised.

Hudhur explained that some enemies of Prophets of God are brought to account during the lifetime of the Prophet while others are not. The Holy Prophet^ﷺ accurately foretold the exact locations where some of the enemies would lose their lives in the Battle of Badr. There were indeed some among the enemy who later accepted Islam and were

saved in the various battles. The real objective of a Prophet and his followers is to spread the message, punishment is not their aim, rather, it is to make people worship God. As a matter of principle those who have been warned will be chastised, whether in this world or the next. That only God knows. Accountability is with God. Hudhur said some people object that this prophecy or that prophecy has not been fulfilled. It will all be evident in the Presence of God. Ahmadis are witness to the fact that many prophecies have indeed come to pass, others are coming to pass and each new day makes the truthfulness of the Promised Messiah^{as} evident. In verse 42 of Surah Al Rad God states that can the opponents of truth not see that God is 'reducing earth from its outlying borders'? Hudhur said Islam spread rapidly in its early years and numerous came in the sphere of its safety and security. When God decreed He also punished. It is God's verdict that either great numbers accepting Islam reduce the earth for enemies of Islam or natural disasters reduce land for them. This happened in the past, is currently happening and will happen in the future. When God is with His Prophet then who is it that can come in the way? There is none who can reverse God's decree. Therein God has given hope and courage to true believers that as long as they continue to be true servants of God, they will have no fear. God is swift in reckoning.

Verse 45 of Surah Al Anbiya states the same subject: 'Nay, We provided those and their fathers with the good things of this world till life grew long for them. Do they not see that We are visiting the land, reducing it from its outlying borders? Can they even then be victors? (21:45). Hudhur said if a nation has been in power for a long period of time and feels superior about it, certainly such situations are not permanent. In fact God states that He generously provides generations upon generations of a nation but it should always be kept in view that great big nations were diminished in the past. In recent past the European nations lost much of their power. They had colonised huge parts of the world and now they are diminished. Russia too had spread over a vast area but many of its nations have gained independence. This very destiny will one day be repeated in America. Smaller countries too may not have any presumptions, they too can diminish. However, there is glad-tiding for Islam, there is glad-

ting for the followers of the Promised Messiah^{as} that Islam will be triumphant. Our Tabligh efforts are humble, our task is to spread the message with love. However, we see glimpses of what Divine decree can do in the form of earthquakes and other calamities. If only the Muslims too would abandon their opposition and become a part of the destiny that will come to pass through the Promised Messiah^{as}. Hudhur said the current-day calamities and disasters are also a sign of support for the Promised

calamities that follow accusation of falsehood on God's appointed people are general and not specific.

Hudhur said a few days ago a huge earthquake struck Chile. Two months ago an earthquake had struck Haiti. The Chilean earthquake was 64-times stronger than the Haitian quake. Hudhur said these are signs in support of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Hundreds of thousands of homes have been damaged. It is being said that the Chilean earthquake is the seventh most dreadful

Patience is also a kind of worship and has countless blessings. Pain strengthens faith.

Messiah^{as}. Many people query that the opposition is from the false Imams, why then are the poor and disadvantaged being killed in these disasters.

Explaining this, the Promised Messiah^{as} said that it is the way of God that when all limits are exceeded in accusing truthful people of God of falsehood and they are persecuted, all kinds of calamities occur in the world. All Books of God state this as does the Holy Qur'an. Just as at the time when Moses (on whom be peace) was accused of falsehood all kinds of calamities befell Egypt. Although the far-afield people of Egypt had not even heard of Moses (on whom be peace) and therefore had not sinned. While the Pharaoh was saved, the unaware were killed. Again, in the time of Jesus (on whom be peace) those who wanted to kill him through crucifixion remained unharmed. However, forty years later thousand of Jews were killed and there was an outbreak of plague. The Qur'an proves that this was due to Jesus (on whom be peace). Similarly in the times of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) a seven year famine took place and most of the poor died whereas the great big evil-doers were saved for a long period. In short it is the way of God that when someone comes from Him and is accused of falsehood, all kinds of calamities come to pass. However, people who have nothing to do with the accusation of falsehood are caught up in the calamities. Gradually the false Imams are seized and the time of the wickedest comes in the end. The natural

earthquake since records began. The earthquake has taken off 1.26 milliseconds from Earth day, which is now this much shorter. Scientists have also recorded that the powerful quake shifted the Earth's figure axis by three inches. Hudhur explained this is the axis about which the Earth's mass is balanced. Thus a situation is arisen to 'reduce earth on its outlying borders'.

The Promised Messiah^{as} indeed foretold earthquakes as one of his signs. A quake struck Chile in 1906 which the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had called as a sign in his support. From 1570 to 1835 five earthquakes struck Chile. The next one struck in 1868 and then the 1906 one. Since then Chile has been struck with eighteen powerful earthquakes. The Promised Messiah^{as} wrote at the time of the Chilean earthquake of 1906 that he had had his prophecies about strong earthquakes striking the world published many times so much so that the earth would disintegrate. He wrote that the earthquakes of San Francisco and Formosa that came in accordance to his prophecy were known to all, but recently, on 16 August 1906 an earthquake had struck Chile which was no less powerful. It destroyed fifteen towns, thousands lost their lives and hundreds of thousands were made homeless. Some could ask how could this be a sign, as these earthquakes did not strike Punjab. They did not realise that God is the God of the entire world not just of the Punjab and He had informed the Promised Messiah^{as} about the whole world. It was unfortunate that accusations of

falsehood were levied in the Punjab. The Promised Messiah^{as} warned that just as earthquakes had struck according to prophecies in America and Europe, they would strike in Asia, some of which would be a picture of Day of Judgement, obliterating life en masse. So much so that those with wisdom will find this extraordinary and no worldly knowledge will be able to explain the phenomenon. This is when mankind will get anxious and many will be given salvation while many will be destroyed. This will come to pass in the not too distant future and many other dreadful calamities will take place. Some occurring from the skies, others on the earth. This will be because mankind has stopped worshipping God and all attention is focussed on the world. The Promised Messiah^{as} said had he not come, these calamities may have been slightly delayed, but with his coming the hidden will of God had been made evident, just as God has declared: '... We never punish until We have sent a Messenger.' (17:16). Those who repent will be granted refuge.

A famous quote of the Promised Messiah^{as} in this regard states: 'O' Europe, you too are not in peace and O' Asia, you too are not safe, and O' dwellers of the islands no false god will help you. I see cities being demolished and find populated areas desolated. The One and Only God remained silent for a long time while repulsive things were done in front of Him and He said nothing. But now He will manifest His countenance with awe. Those who have ears to hear may listen that the time is not far. I tried to gather everyone under the refuge of God, but it was certain for what was destined to be fulfilled. I say most truthfully that the turn of this country is also approaching. You will witness the time of Noah and you will see the incident of Lot. But God is lenient in chastisement. Repent, so that you may be given mercy. A person who leaves God is a worm not a man and a person who does not fear Him is dead not alive.' Hudhur added that this warning is specifically for the region of India and Pakistan.

Hudhur prayed that may God give sense and understanding to the world to recognise one sent from God and is thus spared God's chastisement. May He also enable us to take the true message of Islam to others and may each difficulty and trouble in this cause strengthen our faith and may we not abandon our task out of fear. May God enable us so.



Dr. John Alexander Dowie founded a Christian utopian community near Chicago and ruled over it with an iron fist. He met his end in 1907, after a “prayer duel” with Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a Muslim, who claimed to be the “Messiah” from an unknown and remote village, Qadian, in India. While American historians have recorded the history of Dowie and Zion, today there remains a historical mystery regarding the prophetic events in Zion that ultimately led to Dowie’s death and the demise of a once prosperous Midwestern town. In the above photo, Dowie, at the height of his power sits with his affluently dressed wife, Jane Dowie.

Dr. John Alexander Dowie: A Man Who Would Be King

An American Theocracy & Tragedy in Zion, Illinois

In the words of religious historian Grant Wacker, Zion was an experiment in social engineering “that ranks among the largest and most grandly conceived utopian communities in modern American history.”

For over a decade, Chicagoans woke up to Bob “Uncle Bobby” Collins on their radio. The WGN-AM 720 morning radio host’s death brought an outpouring of emotion and tears as Chicagoans sought to share their grief.

Collins died after a mid-air collision over downtown Zion on Feb. 8, 2000. Collins’ plane, after both airplanes came down in the city of Zion, narrowly missing the Sheridan Nursing Home crashed into the roof of Midwestern Regional Medical Center, 2501 Emmaus Ave., and subsequently exploded. The other plane plunged into the middle of Elim Avenue striking a tree before coming to rest on a residential sidewalk between 25th and 26th streets.

The damaged hospital was founded by a family practice physician in the community of Zion, to serve the medical needs of local residents. It was simply known as the Zion Hospital. It was eventually sold to the Cancer Treatment Centers of America (CTCA) and eventually became known as the Midwestern Regional Medical Center on September 25, 1991. The renovation of the hospital had assistance from the Zion City Council. The council approved an ordinance to issue \$20 million in general obligation bonds to finance the project.

Several years later, planning was well underway to add a two-story, outpatient oncology clinic above the radiation oncology center. Those plans were put aside when Collins’ plane crashed onto the roof of the hospital. The crash caused extensive damage to the roof and fifth floor of the hospital. The energy that would have gone into adding the two additional floors, instead went into renovating the existing hospital.

All of this probably would have gone unnoticed, except for religious historians and older Zion residents, who commented on the fact that the Collins’ fatal accident brought back dark memories of Zion’s history and its founder, Dr. John Alexander Dowie. Civic, religious and political leaders prefer the image of Zion being a quiet little town, located along the lakeside, some 41 miles north of Chicago and a stone’s throw away from Illinois’ northern border that touches Wisconsin. Dowie’s name is rarely mentioned in Zion, most residents have no knowledge of the city’s founder.

Yet, in the words of religious historian Grant Wacker, Zion was an experiment in social engineering “that ranks among the largest and

most grandly conceived utopian communities in modern American history.”

The architect of this brave new utopian world was Dowie. A Scot, who began his clerical career as a Congregationalist, Dowie left that body in 1878 to launch his own denomination, which, despite its purely Protestant nature, he dubbed as the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church (CCC).

When Zion City was incorporated in 1902, 7,000 inhabitants made their home in the Christian utopia. Named after the mountain upon which Jerusalem was built, Zion City was to be communitarian and theocratic, a place of Christian cooperation, racial harmony, and strict fundamentalist morals.

could not bear to see the suffering that surrounded him and he refused to do nothing. It was in this passionate state that he claimed to have had some revelation. Dowie himself writes of this revelation that,

“The words of the Holy Ghost inspired in Acts 10: 38 stood before me all radiant with light, revealing Satan as the defiler and Christ as the Healer. My tears were wiped away, my heart was strong, I saw the way of healing, and the door thereto was opened wide, and so I said, ‘God, help me now to preach that word to all the dying ‘round, and tell them how ‘tis Satan still defiles, and Jesus still delivers, for He is just the same today.’”²

Dowie’s Christian perspective was based on “divine healing.” He argued that sickness and infirmity were manifestations of sin and inadequate faith. Consequently, he preached a radical rejection of all conventional medical treatment in favor of prayer and clean living. He had a profound and rabid hatred for the medical profession.

Dowie’s initial claim to divinity can be traced to his life in the “land down under.” It was in Australia, 1876, when a plague had stricken Newtown, a suburb of Sydney. A resident there, John Alexander Dowie was greatly grieved by the horror of that plague.¹ Dowie

Almost instantly after receiving this revelation, some men rushed into Dowie’s room requesting his assistance in prayer for a girl, Mary, who was believed by a local physician to be fast approaching her death. Believing this to be the fulfillment of the prophecy he received moments ago, Dowie rushed over to Mary’s home intent on her recovery.³ Dowie, upon reaching the girl’s room, began praying fervently for her recovery, invoking God and Prophet Jesus^{as}. Dowie believed disease and suffering was attributed to the work of Satan. In Dowie’s mind, illness was a sign of a lack of faith. The doctor was confused and told

Dowie there was nothing to be done and that the impending death of Mary was simply God's will. Dowie refused to allow such nonsense and continued to pray.⁴ Throughout this period of the late 1870's, Dowie grew in popularity as a faith healer in Australia, and soon this popularity spread to many western countries as well as Dowie's head. It was his new mission to preach salvation and healing, which ultimately led to his moving to the United States, specifically Chicago, Illinois.⁵

Dowie entered the United States in the year 1888 in San Francisco where he was already known and respected. One woman described Dowie's early preaching in the Americas as focused more on spirituality than on his healing abilities.⁶ In addition to this, Dowie would refuse to pray for those who were not faithful themselves.⁷

Gordon Gardiner provides an account of one Jennie Paddock who was one of the early Americans who was prayed for by Dowie and was healed. Gordon writes,

She [Mrs. Paddock] had a large fibroid tumor in her abdomen which had grown so firmly to the blood vessels that the doctors believed an operation would prove fatal...Dr. Dowie first satisfied himself that the woman was a Christian. Then he offered prayer for her...details of her healing were published in the Chicago Inter-Ocean, one of the leading newspapers of the day.⁸

After this early success, the methodology of Dowie began to morph into something more egoistic and arrogant. One example of his growing arrogance was the manner by which he executed his "healing homes." It was in May of 1894 that Dowie set up one of his first healing homes in Chicago.⁹ The "healing homes" required that all medical supplies and drugs etc. be left and one need only bring themselves and faith in God.¹⁰ Dowie had an absolute mistrust of the medical profession, which was unfortunate. In fact, Dowie was repeatedly arrested for practicing medicine without a license.¹¹

A number of interesting events occurred in relation to Dowie between the period of his arrival in America and the opening of Zion city. One interesting event is the healing of a cousin of Abraham Lincoln, Amanda M. Hicks. Miss. Hicks was plagued by a cancerous tumor and upon Dowie's prayer was apparently healed. The spiritual aspect of Dowie's healing was the requirement that one should place his or her full faith in



Early in 1902, Dowie had a large "hotel" constructed, called the Elijah Hospice, to accommodate workers who would build the new city. The Hospice was located on Sheridan Road and 26th Street. The above photo was taken at Elim Avenue and Sheridan Road looking north. It took 500 workers two months to complete the three-story building, which at the time was the largest wooden structure in Illinois. Painted white, the Hospice seemed to be the very icon of Dowie's message of "clean and faithful living." The building's dome is one of the city's oldest landmarks, and sits prominently along Sheridan Road where it is seen by thousands of people each day. It is the only surviving remnant of Zion's grand wooden hotel, which was destroyed by bulldozer after city leaders did not want to restore the deteriorating building.

God.¹² Another interesting event was a meeting between Dowie and the then President McKinley. Dowie had allegedly predicted the assassination of the President, which occurred some days after their meeting.¹³

An intensely charismatic preacher, Dowie quickly accumulated a substantial midwestern following. In 1901 he persuaded 10,000 of his congregants to settle on 6,600 acres of unoccupied land he had mortgaged at the northernmost end of Sheridan Road, now known as the City of Zion. There Dowie proposed to build a prosperous theocratic utopia free of sin, vice, class antagonism, and poverty—a veritable anti-Chicago, in other words. The shining city by the lake was conceived as a hybrid of commune and company town. Settlers would be employed in various collectively owned light industries, which included a lace factory, candy factory, print shop, lum-

ber mill, and bakery.

To keep this hive of industry on the straight and narrow path, Dowie forbade his followers to purchase property outright. Instead, the citizens of Zion leased their homes for a generous term of 1,100 years, their tenancy subject to swift termination should they attempt to exploit it for any immoral enterprise. Expressly forbidden by the terms of the lease were saloons, tobacco shops, opium joints, theaters, opera houses, gambling dens, dance halls, circuses, brothels, and "any place for the manufacture or sale of drugs or medicines of any kind, or the office of a practicing physician."

Dowie and his followers sought to escape what they saw as the lawlessness and sin of American society by establishing a carefully planned utopia with Dowie as "general overseer." In the first issue of the paper he edited, *The Coming City* (June 27, 1900), he declared: "Zion City will be

built by Theocrats. It will be run by Theocrats. It will aim to overthrow Democracy, and establish Theocracy over all the earth, and sea, and in deepest hell, even as God rules in highest heaven.”

Initially, some 25 businesses and commercial interests jump-started Zion City’s economy, providing work for the people who moved there from around the world. The Zion Department Store and the factory of Zion Lace Industries together employed as many as 3,000 workers. But by 1905, Zion’s local economy was in shambles. However, some say the fall of Zion was due to Dowie’s worldly ambitions and his declaration in 1903 that he declared himself Elijah the Restorer, messenger of the Second Coming of Christ.

The killing stroke Dowie dealt on himself was claiming to be Elijah. Dowie himself had no record of revelation such that this could have been remotely true. Those who claim themselves to be prophets or any messenger of God must have proof of constant revelation.

The most interesting account of the blow dealt to Dowie and his beloved Zion City was his interaction with Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah^{as} and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. As Dowie was an enemy of all religions but his own, it is not surprising he had no use for Islam.

On February 14, 1903, he wrote in his paper: “I pray to God that Islam should soon disappear from the world. O God, accept this prayer of mine. O God, destroy Islam”. Again, on August 5, 1903, he wrote in his paper: “The black spot on the mantle of man (Islam) will meet its end at the hands of Zion”. Finally, Dowie directed this caustic remark at Ahmad^{as} in his weekly magazine, the *Leaves of Healing* of December 1903: “There is a Muhammadan Messiah in India who has repeatedly written to me that Jesus Christ lies buried in Kashmir, and people ask me why I do not answer him. Do you imagine that I shall reply to such gnats and flies? If I were to put down my foot on them I would crush out their lives. I give them a chance to fly away and live.”

In the summer of 1903, this brought a well-publicized challenge to an Islamic prayer duel to the death, or *Mubahila*, from a small village, Qadian, on the Indian subcontinent. “Whether the God of Muhammadans or the God of Dowie is the true God, may be settled...he should choose me as his opponent and pray to God that of us two, whoever

is the liar may perish first.... I am an old man of 66 years and Dr. Dowie is eleven years younger; therefore on grounds of age he need not have any apprehension.... If the self-made deity of Dr. Dowie has any power, he shall certainly allow him to appear against me and procure my destruction in his lifetime.”

Whether the Almighty took any interest in their contest, there is no doubt about the winner. Prior to his death, Dowie was paralyzed and suffered from dementia. His beloved city of Zion was bankrupt and eventually placed in receivership. As his life slipped away into darkness, his friends and family deserted him, and now only a faint memory remains...a memory easily forgotten. However, if it were not for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the memory of Dowie surely would have been long forgotten. Dowie’s life serves as a proof of the truth of Islam and the truth of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} and nothing more.

The *Truth-Seeker* of June 15 1907 wrote: “The Qadian man predicted that if Dowie accepted the challenge, he would leave the world before his eyes with great sorrow and torment. If Dowie declined, the Mirza said, the end would only be deferred; death awaited him just the same and calamity would soon overtake Zion. That was the grand prophecy: Zion would fall and Dowie would die before Ahmad.”

The *Herald of Boston*, in its issue of June 23 1907, observed: **“Dowie died a miserable death with Zion City torn and frayed by internal dissensions.”**

In 1928 the popular historian Gilbert Seldes claimed that “since the time of Brigham Young there has been no phenomenon like the growth of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion”. Seldes exaggerated, yet there is ample evidence that the town, which numbered 7,500 residents at the time Dowie was stricken, ranks among the largest and most grandly conceived utopian communities in modern American history. Even so, students of American religious history for the most part have overlooked it.

Zion City rarely is mentioned in the standard surveys of the field, and even in monographs dealing with early Pentecostalism, where it ought to loom large, the settlement usually receives only brief and grudging attention. The second and larger aim of the essay is to suggest that the impulses that ultimately undergirded the community cannot be translated readily into theories of

social disorganization, cultural deprivation, or personal maladjustment.

All of these factors were undeniably present, but they do not explain plausibly the abrupt emergence, nor even the long, drawn-out demise, of the endeavor. Succinctly stated, no part of the story of Zion City makes much sense unless one appreciates the central and irreducible role of religious motivations.¹⁴

It was 10 years ago that Bob “Uncle Bobby” Collins’ plane took a flight that sadly crashed into a medical facility that could never have existed in Dowie’s Zion. The hospital’s staff is comprised of more than 100 physicians; many have practices in the Zion community. The hospital is now Zion’s largest employer and provides medical care to cancer patients from around the world. It is located directly across the street from Dowie’s 25-room mansion, “The Shiloh House,” a museum filled with Dowie artifacts.

Regarding his fateful encounter with Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, there are no historical records, according to the Zion Historical Society, despite the fact that more than 25 American newspapers followed the story until Dowie’s death, March 9, 1907. Ahmad^{as} died one year later. His legacy continues in Zion through the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Mission House, 2103 Gabriel Avenue.

Hasan Hakeem is the President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Zion and is also a Chaplain at the Kenosha County Correctional Facility, Wisconsin. Aasim Ahmad is a Senior at Lake Forest College.

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- ⁵ *God’s Generals: John Alexander Dowie Why They Succeeded and Why Some Failed*, DVD, directed by Roberts Liardon (2005; Whitaker Entertainment).
- ⁶ Gordon Gardiner, *Apostle*, 7.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ¹⁰ *God’s Generals*, Roberts Liardon.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*,
- ¹² Gordon Gardiner, *Apostle*, 9-10.
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Ahmadiyya Perspective on the “Grand Prophecy”

An international freelance radio and TV journalist, working on assignment in Indonesia, learns of the story of Zion, Illinois and Dr. John Alexander Dowie, after interviewing members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on persecution in the Asian country. She was told, “If you are doing a story on the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, you have to go to Zion, Illinois because of its amazing history and the prayer duel between Dowie and the founder of the Ahmadiyya Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as).”

On the eve of Zion’s Centennial (year 2001), the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community hosted a national conference, “Messiah 2000,” to commemorate the historical prayer duel between the city’s founder, Dr. John Alexander Dowie and the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Alaihis Salam. The highly successful conference brought more than 4,000 Ahmadies to Zion. Since there was no facility in Zion to accommodate the participants, the main venue was held at Carthage College, near Kenosha, Wisconsin, located near Zion.

The history of Dowie’s Zion City is well known to the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. They believe that Dowie’s death in 1907 was nothing less than the fulfillment of what is referred to as the “Grand Prophecy,” a divine sign from God to the western world. Ahmadi Muslims consider it to be a prophetic revelation and divine support from God for the Promised Messiah^{as}.

The Ahmadies in support of Ahmad argue that “one who attributes falsehood to Allah; in particular falsehood about prophethood cannot escape punishment. Allah states in the Qur’an:

“And if he had falsely attributed even a trivial statement to Us, We would surely have seized him by the right hand, And then surely We would have severed his jugular vein, And not one of you could shield him from him.” [(69:45)-(69:48)]



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}

In principle, this is a measure regarding one who attributes falsehood to Allah. The Promised Messiah^{as} presented this measure as a testimony to his truthfulness. He said that it is a Sign that one who is false is destroyed.

It was Dowie who in 1903 advocated the demise of Islam, supplicated to God in his weekly newspaper, *The Leaves of Healing*: This prayer: “I pray to God that Islam should soon disappear from the world. O God, accept this prayer of mine. O God destroy Islam.”

Anwer Mahmood Khan, who authored a book on the subject, “Fulfillment of a Grand Prophecy: Hadhrat Ahmad’s Challenge to John Alexander Dowie,” said: “Dowie’s verbal abuses upon the character of the founder of Islam ostensibly hurt Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. He responded to Dowie’s venomous attacks with polite remarks of resolving the matter amicably through prayer. This fell on deaf ears and Dowie’s verbal attacks increased as time passed. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} then challenged Dowie to a prayer duel in which each of the claimants would pray to God Almighty that whoever is the liar would perish in the life of the other.”

Despite the magnitude of this historical prayer duel, there is not one footnote acknowledging that such an event ever took place in the life of Dowie. Several historians familiar with Dowie’s Zion and his life have excluded any references to his contact with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. But the “missing history” was recorded by at least 31 American newspapers over a five-year period, 1902-1907 including the *New York Times*.

To the casual observer, what took place in the City of Zion may appear to be nothing more than a crazy claim by a religious charlatan and perhaps its ending too much of a coincidence but that would be like shutting one’s eyes to the truth and not judging such matters in a rational manner. The fact of the matter is that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s^{as} Ahmadiyya Muslim Community continues to prosper and advance after more than 100 years of succession to spiritual leadership since Ahmad’s death in 1908.

In Dowie’s Zion, his name is but a faint memory, it’s apparent that no one wants the stigma of Dowie’s actions and claims to be a part of Zion’s history. Yet, it is a compelling story for truth seekers that will not die. A mere Google of Dowie’s name reveals repetitious webpages with references to Dowie’s history and his faith healing ministry.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) Mission House sits on property formerly owned by Dowie. The organization has ongoing social service and educational programs including a Jail Ministry marked by its multi-faith programs. Recently, the Ahmadiyya Community was the first to support a community proposal to save the last vestige of Dowie’s former wooden hotel. A 109-year-old Dome that once proudly sat atop the Zion Hotel may be demolished for lack of resources to maintain the historical structure. Dowie built the Zion Hotel in 1901 for workers who would help build the new city. Though the hotel was razed in 1979, the community raised money and saved the white-colored Dome. As news of the story hit the newspapers, there was an outpouring of community support. Among them was the president of Zion’s AMC, who indicated that the Muslim community would do whatever it could to help. “I think it would be tragic if we allow the Dome to be obliterated,” said Hasan Hakeem, President, AMC/Zion.

As a result of its historical linkage to Zion, and Ahmadi Muslims from around the world visit Zion. A popular site is Dowie’s former home, the Shiloh House, now a museum housing remnants of Dowie’s Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in the 25-room mansion. The followers of Mirza Ahmad (as) have no animosity to the people of Zion, said Hakeem. “We are only interested conveying the message of Islam.”

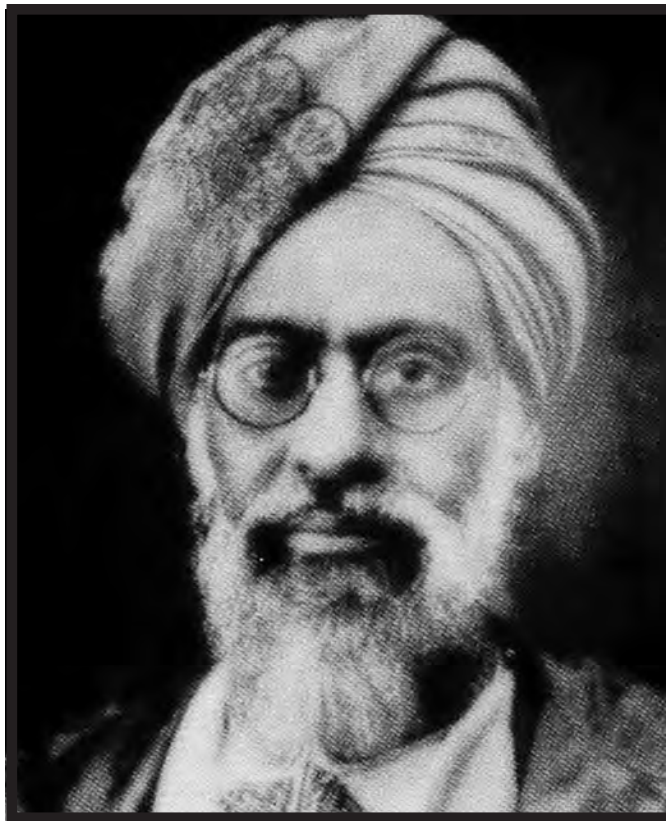
Islam in Early America

By Dania S. Ahmed

As ambassadors of Islam, we often complain about how difficult it is to convey this beautiful, priceless gem to the West. We say that the dominating secular culture of the West has gone too far in promoting the “individual” and the self-made man and that Westerners have no time for God, for religion — but really, do we have *any* idea? We also live in an immensely technological time, one marked by the comfort of having all kinds of information readily available at our fingertips, with messages traveling throughout the world instantaneously — do we truly use this blessing to our advantage, as mini missionaries, to propagate our faith? Imagine the arduous journey from London to New York on a ship, equipped with the heavy responsibility of disseminating the message of Islam upon reaching the American shore. Known on the surface as a land of endless opportunity, the United States came with many downsides. At a time when racism against immigrants was highly rampant and when a prevailing separatist attitude hindered the universality of Islam to flourish, accomplishing this pivotal call to duty seemed near impossible. This was America in the roaring 1920s. It was in January 1920 when Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra}, a close companion of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC), Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, left London for New York to become in what the second successor of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community – Mirza Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, called “one of the first pioneers in the spiritual colonization of the Western world.”¹

In the 1920s, America was not familiar with the universality of Islam. Through movements such as the Nation of Islam (NOI), which, affected by the unfortunate existence of racism preached Islam only through a limited, objective and incom-

plete lens, there was much capacity for progress to unite people of all races under the one common umbrella of the Islam. At its very core, Islam advocates universal brother and sisterhood. Another early Black supremacy extremist group seeking to rise in opposition against slavery was the Moorish Science Temple of America, which labeled white people as “devils”. This inflamed discriminatory stance, resulting from white superiority was not surprising yet it was clear that something was indeed miss-



Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, First USA Missionary

ing. This is where Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} stepped into the picture.

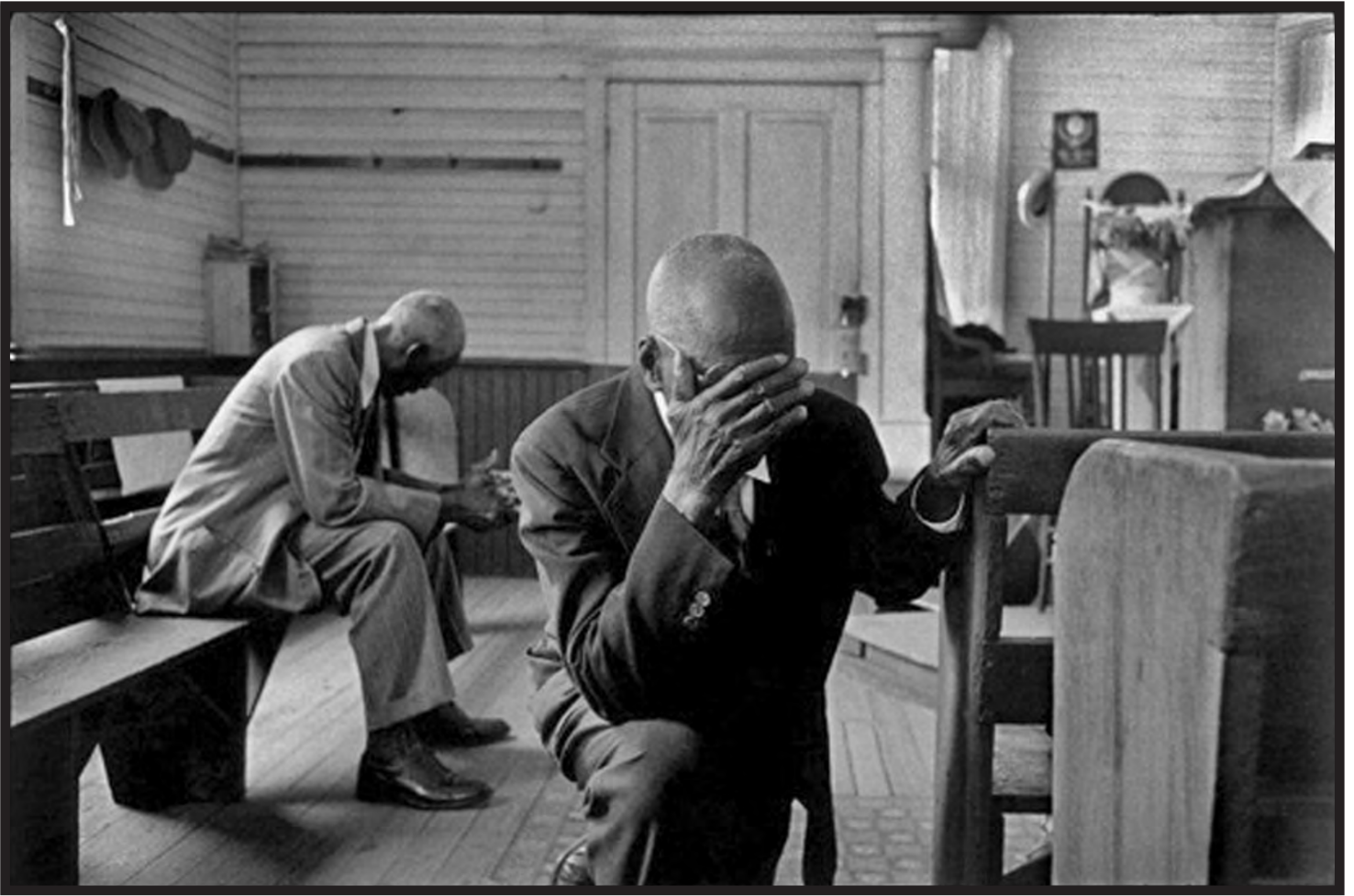
In his comprehensive article, *East of The Sun (West of the Moon): Islam, the Ahmadi, and African America*, Professor Moustafa Bayoumi highlights Mufti Muhammad Sadiq's crucial role to introduce to America an unprecedented multi-racial model of Islam. He writes:

“The Ahmadi had objected to the manner in which British missionaries were reviling the Prophet Muhammad and set out

not just to correct this error but also to illustrate how Jesus was a prophet of Islam. They had observed how missionaries in the East had succeeded in misrepresenting Islam and felt that a proactive agenda of missionizing was needed to counteract this damage. Recent Hindu-only movements in India also fueled the drive to survive in a world of plural faiths. “Reason itself revolts against this exclusiveness.”²

And so the struggle and revolt against exclusiveness, whether it was in the East or the West, was under way. Universal inclusiveness sought to somehow belong. In America, this meant a fresh new beginning which was only feasible after Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} confronted the bitter realities, which surrounded him vehemently. There were numerous obstacles on the road leading to the victory of Islam in America. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} did not stop once to give up his cause.

The determination of Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} to impart the message of Islam cannot be underestimated. This expedition began on the very ship on which Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} was aboard as he delivered Chapter 3, Verse 32 of the Holy Qur'an to his fellow passengers: “Say, if you love Allah, follow me; then Allah will love you.” This simple yet powerful glimpse into the sacred truth empowered four Chinese men, one American, one Syrian and one Yugoslavian to convert to Islam. The bitter realities, which Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} had to face too cannot be rendered minuscule. Immediately following arrival at Ellis Island in New York, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} was accused of coming to the United States to practice polygamy. Despite being sent to the detention house in Philadelphia as a result of the accusation, he did not lose his sense of purpose. He did not leave that jail before converting nine other people with diverse backgrounds to Islam. The countries they represented in-



Sadiq noted that African Americans in particular were attracted to Islam. In a country offering them little hope due to their skin color, African Americans found liberation and a sense of belonging in the framework offered to them by the first Muslim missionary in America.

cluded: Jamaica, British Guyana, Azores, Poland, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and France. Indeed, this was an amazing feat for a man, who according to the American separatist rule of thought was no more than an immigrant for whom the illogical Asian exclusion laws applied. The *Review of Religions* expressed its outrage and confirmed “the gap between America’s ideas of freedom, justice and equality and the nation’s actual practice.” Moreover, a Philadelphia newspaper, *Press*, described Mufti Muhammad Sadiq[™] in these words: “...after traveling thousands of miles, alone and friendless, hopes to begin his crusade to convert the Americans to the doctrines

taught by the prophet Ahmad, of whom he is a principal disciple.”³

Mufti Muhammad Sadiq[™] was released shortly thereafter with the torch of his perseverance shining ever so brighter. He knew that he would still have to by any means confront the exclusion laws, which were inconsistent with the universal paradigm of Islam. In fact, in the defense of his faith and spirit of jihad of the pen, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq[™] wrote in *The Muslim Sunrise*:

“if Jesus Christ comes to America and applies for admission to the United States under the immigration laws, [he] would not be allowed to enter this country because 1.

He comes from a land which is out of the permitted zone. 2. He has no money with him; 3. He remains bare-footed, which is a disorderly act. 6. He is fighting for the country. 7. He believes in making wine when he thinks necessary; 8. He has no credential to show that he is an authorized preacher. 9. He believes in practicing the law of Moses [polygamy].”⁴

Mufti Muhammad Sadiq[™] noted that African Americans in particular were attracted to Islam. In a country offering them little hope due to their skin color, African Americans found liberation and a sense of belonging in the framework offered to them by the first Muslim missionary in America.

Before this framework, a question of identity lingered. On which side could African Americans take refuge? On one hand, there was fierce resentment towards the history of enslavement and on the other, Black supremacy threatened to perpetuate intolerance. Implementing Islam's views on not only moderation but also universal and inclusive brotherhood signified remarkable progression. These notions of Islamic balance and reason were therefore, first brought to the United States by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Realizing the noteworthy contribution of missionary work, Richard Brent Turner writes in *Islam in the African-American Experience*:

"The Ahmadiyya was unquestionably one of the most significant movements in the history of Islam in the United States in the twentieth century, providing as it did the *first multi-racial* model for American Islam. The Ahmadis disseminated Islamic literature and converted black and white Americans. They attacked the distortions of Islam in the media, established mosques and reading rooms and translated the Qur'an into English...their goal was to alter permanently the historic patterns of racial and ethnic separation that existed among Muslims in America."⁵

How could any of this be possible without having genuine passion for Islam, the perfect religion for guidance and progress of man? It is really remarkable that from the humble village of Qadian in India, the earliest foundations of Islam in America were found in some of the most vibrant and bustling cities of the world such as New York and Chicago. The fact that Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} planted a seed in America through his missionary work, which gradually grew into a tree seems to be something that is often buried in history and not disclosed. This accomplishment needs to be acknowledged. It was through Mufti Muhammad Sadiq's spiritual commitment to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} that this mission was fruitful.

Imagine the seed of faith being planted on Madison Avenue in New York City. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} did just that. Dr. George Baker and Ahmad Anderson were, as Turner reveals, among the first white Muslims in the United States in the early 1900s. In an operation solely armed with jihad of the pen and speech, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} went from city to city and gave lectures. In doing so, he garnered a unique identity as the first Muslim missionary in the United States.

Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} was a graduate of the University of London, a philologist of international repute and an expert in Arabic and Hebrew. In the creation of a universal identity, he did not tire. Rather, he reached out to all Muslims in the United States and in his piece, "My Advice to the Muhammadans in America," emphasized the fact that because Muslims come from all lands, it is their duty to come together in the melting pot that is the United States and embrace what should be their primary identity — Muslim.

He further stated that most of these people were Muslims in name only and that the United States was a good place to settle in but that upholding their Muslim identity was highly important. In keeping with this necessity, he gave the following guidance: 1) Retain Muslim names; 2) Offer daily prayers; 3) Read, write and speak Arabic — the common language of Islam; 4) Teach their children to be good Muslims; 5) Donate the interest gained from their bank accounts to the propagation of Islam; 6) Build mosques in every town; 7) Promulgate Islam in America; and 8) Join the Ahmadiyya Movement. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} gradually grew more aware of the ingrained racism and bigoted attitudes of white Protestant whites in the United States. He thus focused his attention on blacks. Turner fittingly refers to this focus as a "potent multi-racial synthesis of anti-imperialist and anti-Christian religious and political ideas."⁶ In addition, Bayoumi examines the identity issue in depth and discerns why African Americans were especially captivated by the message: "It is important to underline that Islam within the Ahmadiyya community was not considered a religion just for Blacks but a religion in which Blacks had an alternative universal history to which to pledge allegiance." One of the earliest issues of *The Muslim Sunrise*, a national publication started by Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} himself reveals that from the years 1921-1925, 1,025 Americans converted to Ahmadiyyat. By the 1940s, there were ten thousand converts.

"In the American context, then, Ahmadi thought opened a critical space for race in the realm of the sacred. In this way, African Americans could metaphorically travel beyond the confines of national identities. They could become "Asiatics" and remain Black, could be proud of their African American heritage and feel a sense of belonging to and participation with Asia."⁷

In a nation of racial divisions, in which the element of progress seemed nowhere to be found, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} assured new converts that they were not only safe in the Jama'at of the Promised Messiah of Islam, but also liberated from the shackles of mental slavery. Islam, once a unique expression of African American political aspirations for separation became more than just that. It was, is and will always be a universal religion of belonging. The new American world, then, did not already encompass universal hope but was introduced to it. Universal hope and the guarantee of a universal identity under the protection of Islam traveled on that ship from London to New York in 1920. Through his missionary work, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} tied together both the mission of the Holy Prophet of Islam^{sa} and the revival of that same message by the Promised Messiah^{as} who sought to establish the unity of God on earth and weld all nations into one by collecting all of them around one faith. In the words of the Holy Prophet^{sa} of Islam, "In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the West."⁸

Dania S. Ahmed is a graduate of Barnard College, Columbia University. She holds a B.A. in Religion and also studied Psychology.

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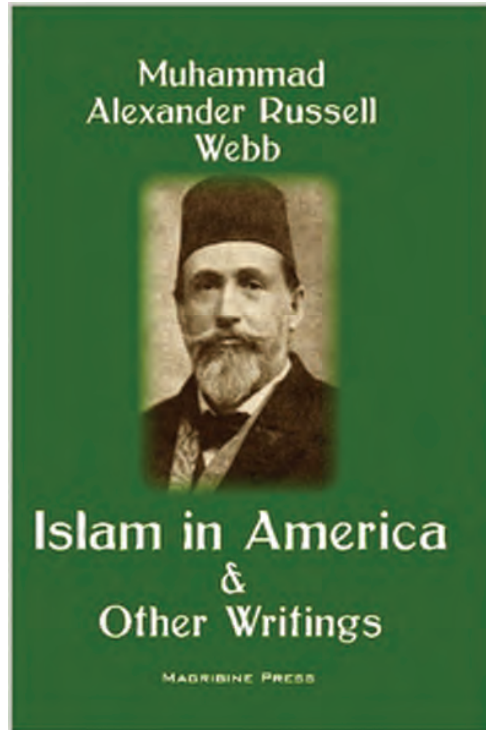
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A Friend of Islam, Alexander Russell Webb

By Amtul Mussawir Mansoor

Alexander Russell Webb was born on November 9, 1846 in Hudson, NY to a Presbyterian family. He abandoned his religion as a teen, and drifted into materialism for the next 30 years. In 1884, Webb embarked on a spiritual quest and started studying Eastern religions. After studying Buddhism and other Asian religions for several years, Webb found none of them particularly satisfying but he took a keen interest in Islam. He had come across a letter of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah, in a newspaper inviting people to the religion of Islam and wrote to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} expressing his interest (Ahmad, 157). He says in the letter that he is wavering with regard to what is the right path and he is searching for the truth.¹ The correspondence between Alexander Webb and Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} was cordial and included literature about Islam.

While still studying Islam, in 1887, Webb was fortunate to secure an appointment from President Cleveland to the post of Consul General at Manilla, the chief of the Philippine Islands. In Philippines, he discovered certain books and documents written by Muslim authors which he had not seen in the United States. He spent all his free time studying Islam. By the grace of Allah, Webb became a Muslim in 1887. Webb has said,



"I am very grateful to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It is because of him that I have had the honor to join Islam."²

In Philippines, Webb met with Badruddin Abdullah Kurr, a member of the Municipal Council of Bombay, and Hajjee Abdullah Arab, a wealthy merchant. The three agreed to work together for the propagation of Islam in America, and their mission came to be known as The American Islamic Propaganda. Webb resigned his post as Consul General of the United States. Before returning to the U.S., Webb toured India, Burma, Egypt, Turkey, China and Saudi Arabia to raise funds for his mission in America. He also met several dignitaries and delivered lectures.

While in India, Webb expressed interest in meeting Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, but due to the opposition against Ahmad^{as}, Webb decided to forgo this meeting so as not to disrupt his fundraising. Later, Webb regretted not meeting with Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} but remained in correspondence with him until his death. In 1906, Webb wrote to the Promised Messiah^{as} stating: "Alas! I came to India but did not visit you, although it was through you that I found the right guidance. In not meeting you, I tried to please some people so that they would give donations...Now I regret greatly that I deprived myself of meeting a man of God for such people."³ In 1910, Webb assisted in revising the posthumous translation of "The Teachings of Islam" by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. Even though Webb was in frequent correspondence with the Promised Messiah^{as}, Webb never joined the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

In 1893, Webb arrived in New York, and began his work of propagation of Islam. Three months after his arrival, the first issue of the "Moslem World" was published with Webb as the editor. This was the first Islamic magazine published in the U.S. The purpose of the magazine as Webb explains was: "to teach the intelligent masses who and what Muhammad was, and what he really taught, and to overturn the fabric of falsehood and error that prejudiced and ignorant writers have been constructing and

supporting for centuries against Islam.” Sadly, the “Moslem World” survived only 7 months due to lack of funding.

Webb also built a “Moslem World Building” in New York City. Lectures on Islamic doctrines and customs were given on Friday evenings. Brief addresses and replies to allegations concerning Islam were arranged for Sunday afternoons. Webb started the earliest documented Mosque in U.S. history located in the Moslem World Building. Webb initiated the scheme of “The American Moslem Brotherhood,” which was made up of independent societies in various cities and encouraged people to study and discuss Islamic history and doctrines among themselves. In this way, the convert would unite in a bond of brotherhood with other Muslims in the U.S., and use his talents and energy to propagate the true faith wherever he could. Webb envisioned these study circles in every city and eventually becoming into Muslim communities, which would stamp out immorality in America, but unfortunately, only a small number of circles were chartered.⁴

In September 1893, Webb was the only Muslim delegate to speak at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He gave two lectures: “The Spirit of Islam” and “The Influence of Islam on Social Conditions.” Part of “The Spirit of Islam” speech is as follows:

“I carried with me for years the same errors that thousands of Americans carry with them today. Those errors have grown into history, false history has influenced your opinion of Islam. It influenced my opinion of Islam, and when I began ten years ago, to study the Oriental religions, I threw Islam aside as altogether too corrupt for consideration...Now let us see what the word Islam means. It is the most expressive word in existence for a religion. It means simply and literally resignation to

In September 1893, Webb was the only Muslim delegate to speak at the first World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He gave two lectures: “The Spirit of Islam” and “The Influence of Islam on Social Conditions.”

the will of God. It means aspiration to God. The Moslem system is designed to cultivate all that is purest and noblest and grandest in the human character.”⁵

After the World Parliament of Religions conference, Webb came back to New York and gave a series of eight lectures in a two-week period, regarding various topics in Islam.

Webb tirelessly continued his efforts in the propagation of Islam, even when Hajjee Abdullah Arab and his associates broke their contract with him and leaving him with no funds. But his determination was unwavering. He says:

“Notwithstanding Hajjee Abdullah’s failure to comply with the terms of his contract, and in spite of the vigorous, persistent and utterly unprincipled efforts of our enemies to destroy our mission, I have been enabled, with God’s help, to continue the good work undertaken for Islam, and the results have fully equaled my expectations. God put it into the minds of faithful Mussulmans to come to my relief when help was most needed, and if He spares my life, I will perform to the best of my ability, all I promised to do under my contract with Hajjee Abdullah Arab. God knoweth the hearts of all men and will judge us both.”⁶

And with this determination, his lectures continued and so did the American Moslem Brotherhood.

Unfortunately, after a few years, his mission did collapse due to lack of funding and choosing the wrong audience to preach the pristine teachings of Islam. Since he only preached to the educated elite, the lower class whites, immigrants, and African Americans were deprived of the knowledge of Islam. Islam would have appealed to those audiences, as seen in the Islamic movements of the 20th century. But Webb still stands as one of the outstanding figures in the early history of Islam in the U.S. He was the “first American to take interest in Mohammedanism (Islam), and introduce to his country.”⁷ He was indeed a friend of Islam!

Endnotes:

¹Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam. *Shahna-i-Haq*, 81-88. Amritsar: Riadh-i-Hind Press. For text of correspondence between Webb and Ahmad, see Appendix C.

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Christian Missions in India

Dr. Khaula Rehman

The British Empire at its height was the largest empire in history and, for over a century, was the foremost global power. The British Empire, by 1922, held a population of over a 458 million people, one-quarter of the world's population, and covered more than 13,000,000 square miles, approximately a quarter of the Earth's total land area. At the peak of its power, it was often said that "the sun never sets on the British Empire" because its span across the globe ensured that the sun was always shining on at least one of its numerous territories. In the nineteenth century the success of Christian missionaries paralleled the political success of the Empire.

In 1851 the first attempt was made to count the number of Christians connected with the Anglican and Protestant missionary societies in India. The number of Christians in 1851 was 91,092, they formed 267 congregations.¹

In 1857, North India was convulsed with war and massacre and many Indian Christians and missionaries were killed. The years which immediately followed witnessed a great expansion of missionary effort especially in the northwestern provinces, particularly the Punjab. This development of missionary work was greatly aided by the support accorded by some of the officials who were responsible for the government of the northwest. Amongst these were Sir John Lawrence (Viceroy, 1864-69), Sir Robert Montgomery and Sir Donald M'Leod, Lieutenant-Governors of the Punjab; Sir Herbert Edwardes, General Reynell Tay-

lor, and Sir Bartle Frere, Governor of Bombay. Without infringing the policy of religious neutrality, which was enunciated in the Queen's proclamation that followed the suppression of the Mutiny, they made no secret of their personal faith, and contributed largely out of their private incomes towards the establishment of new mission stations. Millions of natives all over India became Christians after 1857.²

Rev. Elwood Morris Wherry (1843-1927) was an American Presbyterian missionary to India who wrote a number of books. He was sent with his wife as American Presbyterian missionaries to Rawalpindi in the Punjab in India in 1867. Let me quote his vision about evangelizing to the Muslims:

tianity for universal supremacy.

This condition should serve to startle the Christian world. Missionary societies should give it most careful thought, men specially suited by education and temperament should be sent into the mission fields located in Moslem countries, with a view to their making a special study of the languages and literature, so as to be able strongly to influence the Moslem mind in their preaching and teaching. As the Spirit chose men specially fitted by education and training for the work of evangelizing the Greek and Roman Empire, let us pray God to send forth many men especially suited to the work of Moslem evangelization."³

CHRISTIAN PREDICTIONS OF CONVERTING WHOLE OF INDIA



"The religion of Islam, holding sway over at least two hundred and thirty millions of Moslems constituting one-seventh of the population of the globe, second only to Christianity in numerical strength among the religions of the world and occupying many of the chief centers of influence in the Eastern world, commands respect, in spite of its appalling errors. It is indeed the only rival of Chris-

According to Indian Census report, during the decade 1901-11 the population of India as a whole increased by 6.4 per cent, or, if we include the gain due to the addition of new areas, 7.1 percent. The Indian Christians increased during the same period from 2,664,313 to 3,574,770—that is, 34.2 per cent increase, or five times as fast as the whole population.⁴ Charles Henry Robison writes in his book, *His-*

story of Christian missions:

“Those interested in the spread of Christianity in India have sometimes tried to forecast the future and to estimate the length of time which may be expected to elapse before India becomes a Christian country. Those who regard the future from a more hopeful standpoint are influenced by a consideration of the mass movements which are now in progress and by the anticipation that the caste system which is the chief obstacle to the spread of Christianity will probably ere long disappear as by a landslide. The fact that 24,000 Moslems in the Dutch East Indies have become Christians within recent years forbids them to despair of the conversion of the Indian Moslems, when they come to be surrounded by a Christian population of the same race and speaking the same languages as themselves.

It may be said: should the increase which has been taking place during the last 30 years be; maintained, in 50 years' time the Christians will number 1 in 21 of the population, in 100 years they will number 1 in 5, and in 160 years the whole population of India will be Christian.”⁵

Aspirations and analysis of other missionaries was not much different. Referring to the prospects of Muslim missions in India, Wherry writes:

“The accessions from Islam, especially in Northern India, have been continuous during all the years since the death of Henry Martyn. One here and another there has been added to the Christian Church, so that now, as one looks over the rolls of Church membership, he is surprised to find so many converts from Islam, or the children and children's children of such converts. In the North, especially in the Punjab and the North-West Province, every congregation has a representative from the Moslem ranks. Some of the Churches have a majority of

their membership gathered from amongst the Mussulmans. In a few cases there has been something like a movement towards Christianity, and a considerable number have come out at one time. But perhaps the fact which tells most clearly the story of the advance of Christianity among Moslems in India, is this, that among the native pastors and Christian preachers and teachers in North India there are at least two hundred who were once followers of Islam.”⁶



Dr. Imad-ud-din, a Christian missionary, in the course of a paper sent to be read at the religious conference held at Chicago, wrote: “There was a time when the conversion of a Mohammedan to Christianity was looked on as a wonder. Now they have come and are coming in their thousands.” At the end of his paper he appended a list of 117 converts from Islam to Christianity who at that time were occupying influential positions in the State or in the Church in India.⁷

The general feeling among the Europeans was that the prospect of commending the Christian faith to Muslims was never as bright as in the nineteenth century given the political and technological supremacy of the European Christians. Dr. Zwemer, one of the best known missionaries to Muslims, who was in

touch with work amongst them in all parts of the world, wrote:

“Without in any way underestimating the new anti Christian attitude of some educated Moslems and the pan-Islamic efforts of others to oppose Christian missions by every modern method of attack or defense, it yet remains true that the whole situation is hopeful to the last degree. The light is breaking everywhere. There never was so much friendliness, such willingness to discuss the question

at issue, such a large attendance of Moslems at Christian schools, hospitals, public meetings, and even preaching services as there is today. ... What is true of Egypt is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Turkey, Persia, India, Algeria, and Java, as abundant testimony and recent missionary correspondence could show. And what does it all mean? It

means that we should press forward with all our might plans for the immediate evangelization of these educated classes. They are adrift, and the Gospel alone can give them new anchorage. . . . They have lost faith in the old Islam and reach out to new ideals in ethics. Who can satisfy them but Christ? This is the missionary's supreme opportunity. If we can win the leaders of Moslem thought now, ‘reformed Islam will be Islam no longer,’ but an open door into Christianity.”⁸

Encouraged by all these analyses, Robinson wrote:

“The task of converting the Mohammedan world to Christ is indeed a hard task but it is not an impossible one. Eight centuries have passed since Pope Urban II stood in the market-place at Clermont and explained to the vast assemblage

there collected the proposal which was then under consideration for attempting to crush by force of arms the Mohammedan power of the East. As those present listened to his impassioned appeal and to his demand to sacrifice, if need be, their lives in the campaign to which he invited them, the whole assemblage exclaimed with one voice, 'It is the will of God.' 'It is indeed the will of God,' said the Pope; 'take, then, this word as your battle-cry, and go forth to victory in the name of Christ.' To those who have ears to hear, a call comes not unsimilar to that which shook Christendom eight centuries ago, but it is a call to a nobler and more difficult crusade than any which the Middle Ages conceived, to one, too, which requires 110 less courage and no less perseverance than those which the Crusaders displayed, but in the prosecution of which we too may take as our watchword with unfailing confidence, 'It is the will of God.'"⁹

Robinson was misreading the will of God, in linking the missionary zeal with the crusades. Despite the planning, hard work and early success of the Christian missionaries, God had other plans. There were prophecies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} that in the latter days a Messiah will come within Islam and break the cross.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} was that Messiah. Leading Christian missionaries of the time like Padre Thakurdas, Padre S. P. Jacob, Rev. Dr. Griswold, Fateh Masih, Waris Masih, Imad-ud-din, Siraj-ud-din, Abdullah Atham, and Henry Martyn Clark, worked their utmost to oppose him. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} was alone except for a few penniless Muslims who had gathered around him. He had no power, no money, and no political backing. But He Who is the Lord and Master of all was his helper. It was He Who commissioned him to proclaim to the world that the days of the revival of Islam were at hand and that the day was not far when Islam would triumph over all other faiths through its spiritual power.

Around the latter half of the nineteenth century, Islam in India was being ruthlessly attacked by the Christians and the Arya Samaj, a militant sect of the Hindus. Under the favorable climate of the British rule, the Christian missionaries were spreading their religion with great

Around the latter half of the nineteenth century, Islam in India was being ruthlessly attacked by the Christians and the Arya Samaj, a militant sect of the Hindus. Under the favorable climate of the British rule, the Christian missionaries were spreading their religion with great force and speed.

force and speed. The Muslims in India were completely heedless to this deteriorating situation and Islam in the country.

It was in such circumstances that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} took up his pen in defense of Islam and to prove its excellences. For this reason he started writing a great book called *Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya*, meaning *Proofs of Ahmadiyyat*. The four volumes of this book were published between 1880 and 1884 while the fifth volume was published in 1905. He did break the cross according to the prophecies, slowly but surely by refuting the false doctrines of Christianity, one by one. His third successor, Khalifatul Masih III, Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmadth said in 1967, at Wandsworth Town Hall, London, England:

"Since these prophetic utterances were made, the world of religion has been completely transformed. The vast continent of Africa, instead of joining the ranks of Christianity, is gathering under the banner of Islam. In India, the Christian missionaries fight shy of facing even inexperienced young Ahmadies. The wish of hoisting the Christian flag over Mecca remains and shall ever remain a vain desire."¹⁰

The Christian missionaries were not amused by this sudden and unexpected turning of the tables in Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's time, in favor of Islam.

ACCUSATION OF MURDER BY DR. MARTIN CLARK

When the Christian missionaries felt that their efforts to refute Ahmad's argu-

ments were futile, they resorted to cheap tactics. Dr. Henry Martin Clark was a Christian missionary working in Amritsar, near Qadian in India. In August 1897, Dr. Clark brought a charge against Ahmad^{as} in the court of the District Magistrate. Dr. Clark accused Ahmad^{as} of instigating a young man by the name of Abdul Hameed to murder him.

The case eventually came up before the court of Captain M. W. Douglas, the Deputy Commissioner of Gurdaspur. Abdul Hameed was properly tutored by the opposition and told a pre-rehearsed story to the court. Captain Douglas, however, felt uneasy about the testimony of Abdul Hameed and asked the District Superintendent of Police to question him.

On interrogation, the youth burst into tears and admitted that he had been lying throughout the case. He then made a full statement saying that he was pressured by other people to lie against Ahmad^{as}. After this, Captain Douglas acquitted Ahmad^{as} with due honor and the case against him was discharged. This is the story of the rise and the fall of the Christian missionaries in India, which is being repeated in all parts of the world, in keeping with the divine promise:

"He (Allah) it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, even if those who associate partners with God hate it." (Al Qur'an 61:10 & 9:33)

Endnotes

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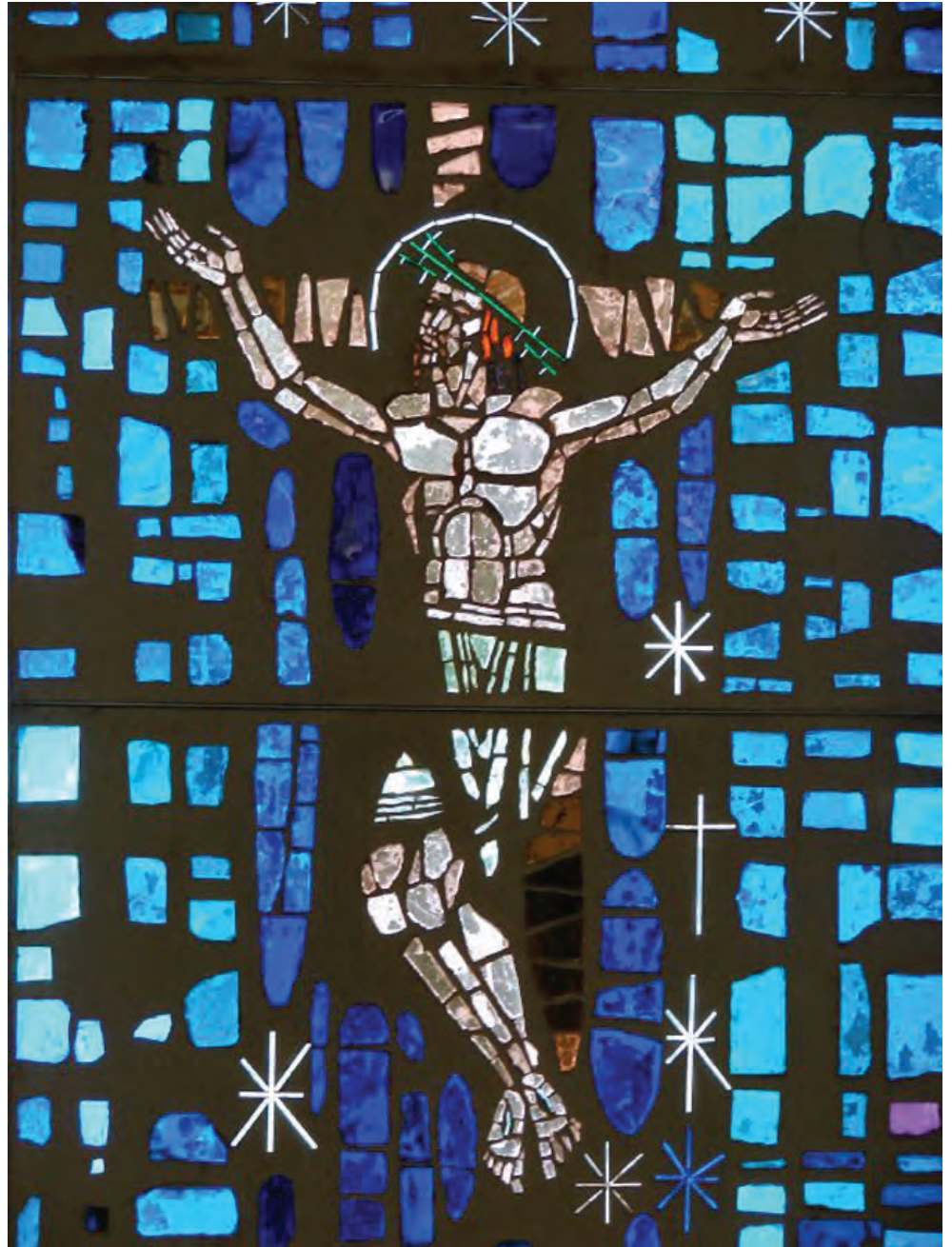
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BBC Documentary: *Did Jesus Die?*

Lubna Roohi Malik

Did Jesus^{as} die on the cross? This is the question that the 2007 BBC Documentary *Did Jesus Die?* seeks to resolve. This short documentary that is available in three parts on YouTube presses Christian theology on tough issues and presents a possible logical explanation that results from the canonical texts when examined from a historical vantage point. With expert opinions from world-renowned religious and historical studies scholars from Oxford University, Princeton University, and the University of North Carolina, this documentary pieces together a possible explanation of the life of Jesus Christ^{as}. The following covers the main points of the documentary. In Christianity, Jesus Christ's resurrection serves as the basis of the faith. To question this idea is heretical. In recent years, however, more and more scholars and theologians within the Christian tradition are beginning to doubt the accuracy of the Gospels and the very idea that Jesus^{as} ascended to Heaven. The difficulty these scholars face is in trying to create a cohesive narrative from the Gospels.

The scholars agree that history shows that only the most horrible crimes were punished by crucifixion. Nails are hammered into the hands and feet; however, it is not from the pain or wounds that the crucified die, but from suffocation. The immense strain on the legs makes it impossible for one to breathe after days of exhaustion. To quicken the process, the legs are often broken. However, all of the Gospels agree that Jesus^{as} was placed on the cross for between three and six hours and was presumed dead at the end of that time period. Unlike the two men who were crucified with Jesus^{as}, Jesus' legs were not broken; he was presumed



dead and placed in the tomb. Even Pilate, the Roman governor, was shocked that Jesus^{as} could have died so quickly; however the centurions assured Pilate—one centurion who had stated that Jesus^{as} was the son of God. How did Jesus^{as} die so fast?

The Gospels are also in agreement that following this declaration of Jesus' death, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus gained permission

from Pilate to take Jesus' body, and laid it in a tomb. There, Joseph and Nicodemus brought one hundred pounds of aloe and myrrh. Why did they take so much of these herbs? Were these healing herbs? Was Jesus^{as} "resurrected" or "resuscitated"? Some scholars argue that modern people confuse "resurrection" to be "life after death." In Hebrew, the word for "resurrection" is the idea for a life to be resuscitated

or come back. There are many stories from the modern world where individuals are deemed dead, but are then resuscitated to life. However, if the language were really to be pressed, modern-day resuscitations could be called “resurrections,” making hospitals fostering thousands of these daily.

There is a theory that Jesus’ disciples sedated him on the cross. This is a possibility because the disciples did give Jesus^{as} some vinegar substance on a sponge, immediately after which Jesus^{as} said, “It is fin-

than they are about the resurrection. Nowhere in the original Gospels is there any mention of ascension. It is not until the verses that were added into the Gospels 200 years later that mention of ascension is made. Matthew mentions no ascension and John simply says that Jesus^{as} did many other things in his life that could not all be written.

But if Jesus^{as} was to leave, would not his disciples wonder when he would return? The Gospels agree that the disciples were expecting Jesus’ return, but not necessarily in

a miraculous manner. Jesus^{as} left, whether by ascension or traveling elsewhere, Jesus^{as} left. He did not permit his disciples to join him, but told them that he would return. Some scholars agree that Jesus^{as} did not mean that he would return on the Day of Judgment as modern

Christianity alleges, but that he would come back later in his own lifetime.

Regardless of when Jesus^{as} was to return or in what form, Jesus^{as} left. In examining the geography of the Roman Empire, if Jesus^{as} were to go to France (as some suggest) or westward, he would be going further into the Roman Empire. Such a decision would be a suicide mission. However, if he were to head eastward, he would be going toward Persia and then into Afghanistan and India. If Jesus^{as} was the Jewish Messiah, then it would make sense for him to have gone eastward. As a Messiah, Jesus^{as} had two duties: (1) to bring world peace and justice and defeat evil, and (2) to gather the scattered tribes of Israel back to the land of Israel. The Jews of today comprise only one of the Jewish tribes, the Tribe of Judah. In the Hebrew Bible

there is a story about the 10 tribes that were taken northeast by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC. These tribes are known as the Lost Tribes. Thus, scholars speculate that if Jesus^{as} believed he was the Messiah, he might have traveled eastward to seek out these Lost Tribes.

In agreement with the scholars’ theory about Jesus’ travels, the people of Kashmir refer to themselves as *Bani Israel*, or *Children of Israel*, possibly linking them to descendants of the Lost Tribes. In Kashmir there are stories of a man named Isa who came to the area in the first century when he was in his thirties. The description of Isa as a healer and shepherd nicely continues the story of Jesus’ ministry, and there it is said that in the local Temple of Solomon in Kashmir, there was an inscription from Isa claiming that he was Jesus^{as} from Israel. Isa is said to have died around 80 AD and is buried in a tomb in Srinagar, Kashmir. Interestingly, the above-ground portion of Isa’s grave is pointing north-south in the Islamic manner, but the body itself is buried east-west in the Jewish tradition. Nothing short of excavation would truly prove who Isa was, but near his grave are his carved footprints, which reveal significant marks, scars, and misalignment of the toes—as if the man had been nailed on a cross with his left foot on top of his right.

Many, including the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, believe Kashmir is where Jesus^{as} spent the majority of his life and died. If true, Jesus^{as} did not die on the cross and was not resurrected. If true, Jesus^{as} did not ascend into Heaven and does not now sit at the right hand of God. If true, for many Christians, this would be the end of Christianity as they know it.

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Romans crucified messiahs and if Jesus^{as} survived, what was he to do? Christian theology solves this issue by miraculously saying he was bodily taken into Heaven, but the original texts are even more unclear about this issue than they are about the resurrection.

ished,” and appeared to perish. Scholars agree that there are stories of people surviving crucifixion in Jewish history.

The next day, the tomb was found empty. People assumed that either someone had stolen Jesus’ body or carried it away, or that God had raised Jesus^{as} bodily into Heaven. The Gospels, in fact, discuss how Jesus^{as} was alive and spoke and ate with his disciples. Thus, Jesus^{as} could not have clinically died on the cross.

But, where was Jesus^{as} to go if he was alive? Obviously all who saw Jesus^{as} would view his resuscitation as an act of God. But what of the practical political problem? Romans crucified messiahs and if Jesus^{as} survived, what was he to do? Christian theology solves this issue by miraculously saying he was bodily taken into Heaven, but the original texts are even more unclear about this issue

From Jesus to Christ: the Early Christians



Reviewed By Zia H Shah MD

This is a four hour PBS documentary about the early history of Christians, which can be seen in the video section of Google.com.¹ Let us start our review with two verses of the Holy Qur'an. It states:

“And when Allah will say, “O Jesus, son of Mary, didst thou say to men, ‘Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?’”, he will answer, “Holy art Thou. I could never say that to which I had no right. If I had said it, Thou wouldst have surely known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. It is only Thou Who art the Knower of hidden things. “I said nothing to them except that which Thou didst command me — ‘Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’ And I was a witness over them as long as I remained among them, but since Thou didst cause me to die, Thou hast been the Watcher over them; and Thou art Witness over all things.” (Al Qur'an 5:117-118)

For a believing Muslim these verses give the essence of how the early history of Christianity started in the time of Jesus, may peace be upon him. The Trinitarian Christians, under the influence of St. Paul have a fairly different idea about early Christianity and they try to find and defend their religion by claiming orthodoxy of Pauline's views. In this perspective it becomes important for all seekers of truth to know as much as possible about the first three centuries of the Christian history and this four hour PBS documentary that is available online should be a good start.

How did Jesus fit into his native religious context, late Second Temple Judaism? And how do we explain the momentous shift in the make-up of the movement, from almost exclusively Jewish to increasingly Gentile, to which Paul's letters, mid-first century, attest?² The devout Christians want to see Christianity rather independent of Judaism, but to the 1.5 billion Muslims and the secular scholars, Jesus was a Jewish prophet. This documentary highlights that he was the Jewish Mes-

siah. The best way to demonstrate the Jewishness of Jesus, is through the study of early Christianity history.

One fact that links Christianity to Judaism clearly is the history of circumcision. It was to be the external marker of the covenant given by God to the prophet Abraham, may peace be on him.³ The early Christians continued to practice this ritual. The first Christian Church Council in Jerusalem, held in approximately 50 AD decreed that circumcision was not a requirement for Gentile converts. This became known as the 'Apostolic Decree' and is one of the first acts differentiating early Christianity from Rabbinic Judaism. The Coptic Christians continue to practice circumcision, even today, a stark reminder that it was only the Pauline Christianity that broke away from this tradition and not all the early Christians.

Early Christianity was inseparable from Judaism. Jesus was a Jewish prophet and when he was put on the cross the inscription on top of the cross was 'the king of the Jews.' Gradually, Christianity came to be a separate

and dramatically different religion from Judaism. How did this come about? This is what the documentary is about. As we demonstrate the links of Jesus with Judaism in history and archeology, our invitation of the Islamic truths to the Trinitarian Christians, becomes more comprehensible to them. The Holy Qur'an says:

"And the Jews say, 'The Christians stand on nothing;' and the Christians say, 'The Jews stand on nothing;' while they both read the same Book. Even thus said those who had no knowledge, like what they say. But Allah shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they disagree." (Al Qur'an 2:114)

Studying early Christianity helps us fully appreciate the logic of this verse of the Holy Qur'an. Early Christianity, after the First Revolt in 70 AD, gradually grew apart from Judaism and established itself as a predominantly Gentile religion. According to the documentary, "It's very important that we remember that up to and through the First Revolt, Christians are still part of Judaism, and the revolt and its aftermath is just the beginning of a split, as each group tries to rethink its earlier traditions in the light of the failure of the First Revolt."

The earliest followers of Jesus composed an apocalyptic, Second Temple, Jewish sect, which historians refer to as Jewish Christianity. The Apostles of Jesus Christ were all apocalypticists who preached to their followers that the world would end within their own lifetimes. The apocalyptic preaching of the Apostles is well known and accepted as historical by religious and secular scholars due to extensive extra-biblical historical accounts of their lives. The Pauline tradition has painted Jesus and John the Baptist also in the colors of apocalyptic message.

Prof. Paula Fredriksen, who is one of the documentary's commentators, is a scholar of the historical Jesus. While some historians interpret the historical Jesus as a non-apocalyptic ethical teacher, she sides with those who portray him as an apocalyptic preacher.

Paula Fredriksen says, "We're hampered by our vocabulary. We know that this group will eventually form a Gentile community and they'll be known as Christians. But this group didn't think that. This group expected Jesus to return and establish the Kingdom of God."

Paul preached the imminent arrival of God's Kingdom on Earth and salvation for those converted to Jesus. "You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake

from sleep. Salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers." [Romans 13:11]

In this regard Prof. Michael White remarks in the documentary, "It's clear that one of the concerns that keeps showing up throughout this period of Paul's ministry is 'When is this Kingdom going to arrive? What's going to happen, how soon?'"

The early Christians are still, 25 years after the fact, anticipating the imminent return of Christ and the imminent arrival of the Kingdom. Paul's very first letter, the earliest single writing that we have in the New Testament, is I Thessalonians, and already in I Thessalonians Paul is having to console them when people are starting to die within the congregation and the Kingdom hasn't arrived yet. Paul believed the earthly world order was about to change, that time was running out and the end was at hand.

Paul alludes in a number of his letters to the message that he would have communicated verbally. He emphasizes two things: on the one hand, very clearly the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus; on the other hand, he also emphasizes the importance of understanding the end time and the immediacy of the end time, and that one must be prepared for it, and the way one prepares for it is to be good. We find a lot of ethics in Paul, and it's around this issue of how one lives in anticipation of the end time that's just around the corner for Paul.⁴

Paul was demonstrably wrong about his apocalyptic message. What else was he wrong about is the fundamental question for every student of Christianity? The Holy Qur'an does not present an apocalyptic Jesus. For example, the Qur'an documents that Jesus was praying for the long term prosperity of his followers:

"Said Jesus, son of Mary, 'O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table from heaven spread with food that it may be to us a festival, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a Sign from Thee; and provide sustenance for us, for Thou art the Best of sustainers.'" (Al Qur'an 5:115)

The documentary describes the effect of the crucifixion on the early Christians

as follows:

"The effect that the crucifixion had on Jesus' followers was the desired effect, from the Roman perspective—that is, that people who were associated with Jesus were terrified. I mean, before the Easter proclamation, there must have been some sort of Easter panic, you see, that folks were hiding out, as they should have, because now they were accomplices of an executed criminal."⁵

It was in this climate, where the early Christians were afraid of being counted as accomplices and at the same time not accepting what seemed to be a shameful death on the cross, that the legends grew around the testimonies of the apostles that twenty years later became subject of Paul's letters and preaching and forty years from the crucifixion became the

Paul was demonstrably wrong about his apocalyptic message. What else was he wrong about is the fundamental question for every student of Christianity.

material for Mark's Gospel, the earliest of the four canonical gospels. The Christian apologists put so much emphasis on orthodoxy of their beliefs and base their belief in resurrection on the testimony of the apostles of Jesus Christ but then fail to take the fact that the canonical Gospels are not written by the apostles, to its fullest conclusion.

The canonical Gospels of Mathew and John are only attributed to the apostles. Mark and Luke were not among the apostles of Jesus. The Gospels of Thomas, Philip and Peter have been discovered but do not serve the purposes of the Trinitarian Christians. Ernest Brougham Docker, an Australian judge, examines the limitations in the so called testimony of the apostles about resurrection in his book, *If Jesus did not die upon the cross: A study in evidence*.

The last supper

He makes several strong points against resurrection of Jesus, but one that can be described in a few lines is quoted here:

It was only 100 years after Jesus was put on the cross that the Jewish expectations of a coming Messiah receded. And Christians now looked to the distant future for the return of their Messiah.

“His forebodings to His disciples, I firmly believe; I am equally convinced that He did not predict His rising again. The Conduct of the disciples after crucifixion shows that they had no expectation of a resurrection; and it is altogether incredible that they could have forgotten a prediction so remarkable.”⁶⁷ This short booklet can be read online.

Let us consider another example here. What does the fact that the term of ‘Trinity,’ was not even coined till 200 AD, say about any orthodoxy in basic Christian beliefs? It took 450 years, and 4 Ecumenical Councils to articulate Trinity, that was opposed to the Jewish understanding and is opposed to all known religions. To a non-Christian it would seem fairly natural that if God is going to send a message to mankind at least He will introduce Himself and not wait for theologians to introduce Him 450 years later.⁸⁹

Elaine Pagels, talking about the diversity of early church in the first and the second century, writes in the introduction of her book, *the Gnostic Gospels*:

“The fifty-two writings discovered at Nag Hammadi offer only a glimpse of the complexity of the early Christian movement. We now begin to see that what we call Christianity—and what we identify as Christian tradition—actually represents only a small selection of specific sources, chosen from among dozens of others. Who made that selection, and for what reasons? Why were these other writings excluded and banned as ‘heresy’? What made them so dangerous? Now, for the first time, we have the opportunity to find out about the earliest Christian heresy; for the first time, the heretics can speak for themselves.

Gnostic Christians undoubtedly expressed ideas that the (so called) orthodox abhorred. For example, some of these gnostic texts question whether all suffering, labor, and death derive from human sin, which, in the orthodox version, marred an originally perfect creation. Others speak of the feminine element in the

divine, celebrating God as Father *and* Mother. Still others suggest that Christ’s resurrection is to be understood symbolically, not literally. A few radical texts even denounce catholic Christians themselves as heretics, who, although they ‘do not understand mystery. ... boast that the mystery of truth belongs to them alone.’ Such gnostic ideas fascinated the psychoanalyst C. G. Jung: he thought they expressed ‘the other side of the mind’—the spontaneous, unconscious thoughts that any orthodoxy requires its adherents to repress.”¹⁰

EPILOGUE

According to the Book of Acts, Christianity began at a single place, at a single moment in time. Fifty days after the death of Jesus — now known as Pentecost — a miraculous event took place. “And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.” [Acts 2:2-3]

According to Professor Harold W Attridge of Yale Divinity School, “That’s the picture that we get in Acts. The historical reality is probably much more complex. And the Christian movement probably began not from a single center, but from many different centers where different groups of disciples of Jesus gathered and tried to make sense of what they had experienced with him and what had happened to him at the end of his public ministry.” The most important fact of early Christianity is that the more we find out about it, the more widely variegated a phenomenon it appears to be.

Roman troops sacked the temple and carried off the sacred symbols of Judaism. Jerusalem, the sacred city, the temple, the center of piety and identity, is gone. It’s very important that we remember that up to and through the First Revolt, Christians are still part of Judaism, and the revolt and its aftermath is just the beginning of a split, as each group tries to rethink

its earlier traditions in the light of the failure of the First Revolt.

The Bar Kokhba revolt (132–136) against the Roman Empire was the third major rebellion by the Jews of Judaea Province and the last of the Jewish-Roman Wars. At the time, Jewish Christians were still a minor sect of Judaism, and most historians believe that it was this messianic claim in favor of Bar Kokhba that alienated many of them, who believed that the true Messiah was Jesus, and sharply deepened the schism between Jews and Christians. It was only 100 years after Jesus was put on cross that the Jewish expectations of a coming Messiah receded. And Christians now looked to the distant future for the return of their Messiah. The Kingdom of God was becoming less an apocalyptic vision than a spiritual abstraction. According to the documentary:

“The self-consciously apocalyptic and messianic identity of Bar Kokhba forces the issue for the Christian tradition. And at that point, we really see the full-fledged separation of Jewish tradition and Christian tradition becoming clear. It is a defining moment in history. The two heirs of an ancient faith, rabbinic Judaism and upstart Christianity, would now follow separate paths.”

In conclusion, the separation of Christianity from Judaism was a slow process, spread over at least a full century.

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Endnotes

¹<http://video.pbs.org/video/1365214164/>

²http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/fredricksen_JesustoChrist.shtml

³ Genesis 17.

⁴<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/etc/script1.html>

⁵<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/etc/script1.html>

⁶Ernest Brougham Docker. If Jesus did not die upon the cross: A study in evidence. London: Robert Scott Roxburghe House, Paternoster Row, 1920. Pages 39-40.

⁷ <http://www.ahmadiyyatimes.com/files/IfJesusDidNotDieUponTheCross.pdf>

⁸<http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/the-council-of-nicaea-and-the-three/1qhnnhcumbuy/76#>

⁹ <http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/the-concept-of-trinity-has-no-legs-to/1qhnnhcumbuy/38#>

¹⁰ Elaine Pagels. *The Gnostic Gospels*. Random House, 1979. Introduction section, page xxxiv-xxxv.

What Does Jihad really mean?

By Maham Khan

Observers need to understand: Those groups that have taken

it upon themselves to defend the name of Islam and in doing so, only bring it disrepute, do not represent the entire Muslim world. Such organizations are politically motivated militant groups, which thrive on the religious sensitivities of Muslims. Their justification, not only for their hostile actions but their sole existence, is Jihad.

Jihad, its arabic root word being *juhd*, implies a struggle, not a war as some may understand. This struggle encompasses the physical as well as the spiritual efforts made in the path of God.

Such efforts do not include the September 11, 2001 attacks, the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis, the gruesome killings of David Dodge, President of the American University in Beirut in 1982 and of Daniel Pearl, a journalist killed in Pakistan in 2002, not to mention the inhumane video-taping of the cruelty, and many other tragic and horrific events. Their perpetrators being Muslims proudly hailed these bloody acts as their jihad. Such a disservice is done to the fair name of Islam by these suicide bombers and murderers, who themselves have fallen prey to those who condone *jihad bis saif* or jihad by the sword.

Maulana Maududi, a 19th century Mus-



"I have come to you with an order: Jihad with the sword has ended from this time forward, but the jihad of purifying your souls must continue. I do not say this of my own accord. This is indeed the will of God".

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} published a pamphlet in 1900, *The British Government and Jihad*, suspending only jihad by the sword, not fully abrogating it.

lim scholar, well respected among Arabs and South Asians, is one such person who triggered this dangerous path to be taken by many Muslims after him. In his book, *Al-Jihad Fil Islam*, he writes,

"When every method of persuasion (over 13 years of preaching) had failed, the Prophet^{sa} took to the sword...that sword removed evil...the sword did something more. It removed their (disbelievers') blindness - they could see the light of the truth...".¹ Maududi granted the permission to kill, owing to his interpretation of Islam's early history.

Maududi gravely injured the peaceful image of Islam by declaring that it spread by the fear of the sword. But is this the true interpretation of jihad?

Toward the end of the 19th century, in the British ruled Indian subcontinent, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} made the claim to be the Promised Messiah as well as the Imam Mahdi awaited by the Muslims. He was however, denounced as a dis-

believer by the majority of them. Many thought that he was ingratiating himself with the British Government by abrogating jihad, and hence forbidding a physical jihad against them.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} published a pamphlet in 1900, *The British Government and Jihad*, suspending only jihad by the sword, not fully abrogating it. In it he claimed: "I have come to you with an order: Jihad with the sword has ended from this time forward, but the jihad of purifying your souls must continue. I do not say this of my own accord. This is indeed the will of God".

And in the Holy Qur'an God specifies what is required of His followers: "And We have expounded the Qur'an to them in diverse ways so that they may take heed...So obey not the disbelievers and strive against them by means of this Qur'an, a mighty striving", (25:51-53). Such a "mighty striving" is to be conducted on a daily basis in a Muslim's life. Only then can he hope to

rid himself of any inner weaknesses and rise spiritually by cleansing his soul as God promises: “He indeed prospers who purifies it,” (91:10).

In 19th century India, with the coming of the British, Muslims were released from the yoke of Sikh rule in the province of The Punjab. Muslims would not “survive the hatchets and spears of the Sikhs”², if they broke the law and dared to perform the *adhaan*, the call to prayer. Mosques were desecrated.³ Muslims were not able to defend themselves; they did

ership or wage a physical jihad. Muslims in The Punjab felt deflated under Sikh oppression and dared not rise against them; yet they deemed it fit to bring down the new British Government, which essentially acted as their savior.

Maulvi Muhammad Hussein Batalvi, to name one, who was a fierce opponent of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} described in his book that India, “...despite being under the rule of a Christian government, is a ‘land of peace.’ It is not permissible for any king—be he an Arab or a non-Arab,

whether he is the Mahdi from Sudan or Hadrat Sultan Shah of Iran, or even if he is the Amir of Khurasan—to fight them in the matter of religion”, (*Iqtisad Fi Masa’il Al-*

“...and the response is that in this age, the jihad accepted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the reformation of self”.

not have the strength to wage a justifiable jihad against the oppressive Sikhs. After the dissolution of the Sikh kingdom, “the Muslims of The Punjab were, for all practical purposes, granted their faith anew. Since a good deed demands a good deed in return we should not renounce the blessing that God has granted us in place of Sikh rule as an answer to our many tears and prayers.”⁴

Therefore, what Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} was promoting was that the idea of *jihad bis saif* or waging a war against a government that had come to the rescue of the Muslims, negated the philosophy of jihad, as stated in the Holy Qur’an:

“Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged—and Allah indeed has power to help them...Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, ‘Our Lord is Allah’...” (22:40-41).

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} was not alone in his thinking. At that time in the Indian subcontinent, there were quite a few scholars who were unanimous in harboring the opinion that India was not a land of conflict for the Muslims for which it would have become incumbent upon them to fight against an unfair lead-

Jihad pg 16).⁵

The Holy Prophet^{sa} proved by his own example that patience is a virtue. He along with his companions were hounded day and night by their enemies, to force them to abandon their belief in the Unity of God. In the face of persistent humiliation and beatings, the Muslims continued to struggle alongside their beloved Prophet^{sa} who never commanded to retaliate when any one of them would be unjustly killed. He displayed what jihad was and it is this kind that he described to be the Greater Jihad.

We have oft heard of the *hadith* (saying of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}) that upon coming back from a battle, the Holy Prophet^{sa} said that “we have returned from a lesser jihad to a greater jihad”. This is what is described above as the struggle to cleanse one’s soul of weaknesses and to purify it.

But it seems, owing to the past extremist acts carried out as jihad, that the Lesser Jihad (jihad with the sword) became the Greater Jihad. Yet despite this picture, many Muslim scholars and clerics are now preaching that fighting and killing in the way of God, is not an honorable thing; it is not what Islam stands for and the Holy Prophet^{sa} never condoned such violence in order to win God’s bless-

ings and the wars he fought were purely defensive.

The sad part of their revisions is that many supported the wars and killings and declared these bloody acts as jihad. Now that grave harm has already been done and non-Muslims are questioning this concept of jihad, Muslims themselves are perplexed by it. The interpretation of jihad that was handed down to them by their apparently learned scholars and pious imams, have brought shame upon Islam. Fighting for the freedom of a country is indeed jihad, but the way to achieve it is not by throwing sticks and stones or beginning an intifada or kidnapping, murdering or committing suicide. Muslims have only incurred more losses through such an interpretation of jihad.

But the Ahmadi Muslims, followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, do not find themselves in such a precarious situation. They have never supported the interpretation of jihad that a physical war must be fought in these days. Hence they have never needed to retract their belief regarding jihad. In the words of Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, the present Caliph of the International Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, “...in this age, the jihad accepted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the reformation of self”.⁶

We can safely say that through the past hundred years or so, jihad was meant to be a struggle against the self. With so much immorality and hatred being spread all over the world, it is a believer’s inner struggle against these evils and temptations that would lead him or her to victory in the Eyes of God. Any other jihad is nothing but a “rebellion”.⁷

Endnotes

1. Murder in the Name of Allah, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, pg 13; Lutterworth Press.
2. The British Government and Jihad, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, pg 15; Islam International Publications Ltd.
3. The True Islamic Concept of Jihad, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, www.alislam.org.
4. The British Government and Jihad, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, pg 15; Islam International Publications Ltd.
5. The True Islamic Concept of Jihad, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, www.alislam.org.
6. The True Islamic Jihad: Address delivered by Mirza Masroor Ahmad, June 23rd 2008, www.alislam.org
7. Ibid



Western Influence on Indian Muslim Thought in the 19th Century

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.

In the 19th century, the Islamic countries could not escape the influence of Western philosophy. Most of the Muslim lands were colonized by Europeans who had established the Western education systems there. In India, though the majority population was Hindu, but millions of Muslims inhabited vast areas. English was the medium of high education in Indian public schools, colleges and universities, and philosophy was taught as one of the subjects for students of arts, and thus the young Muslim minds were exposed to the Western philosophical ideas. The Western thoughts and information constantly reached Indian bookstores, libraries and homes, and the Western philosophy started to have its bearing on Indian Muslim thinkers as well as theologians.

By nature Islam is not against philosophy. Philosophy takes its birth from within the human tendency to love knowledge, wisdom and truth. Philosophy exercises logic and rationality to explore the basic principles of existence that are usually taken for granted by people as realities, and it discusses values upon which human conduct is based. It critically examines various concepts of knowledge and tries to improve upon them. The Holy Qur'an also lays down great emphasis on the use of 'Wisdom' — '*hikmah*' — in human affairs. The Holy Qur'an says: "Whoso is granted the Wisdom has been granted abundant good" (2:270). In other words, to have wisdom and judicious insight are commendable qualities of a good Muslim. According to the Holy Qur'an, among the most important divinely inspired tasks of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be on

him) one was to teach the believers wisdom (2:152). One of the sayings of the Prophet is: "Pursuit of knowledge is a duty of every Muslim, man and woman." [Ibne Majah]. The Holy Quran itself is named "*al-Hikmah*" the Wisdom (17:40), and *al-Furqan* — that which makes distinction between right and wrong, between truth and false (25:2).

Since the first century of Islamic era Muslim thinkers have engaged in discussion on topics such as the existence of God, His Unity, His Omnipotence, and other Divine attributes. Subtle and thought provoking discussions took place among the Muslim philosophers on subjects like the creation of the world out of nothingness, predestination, freedom of human will, nature of sin, and salvation by works or by faith. Several schools of thoughts emerged in early Islam.

The city of Alexandria in Egypt was

the cultural center where Greek-Hellenistic philosophy was well-preserved. In the middle of the seventh century, it was captured by Muslims, and towards the end of the eighth century, and by the beginning of the ninth century, Greek philosophical works of Aristotle, Plato, and Galen were translated by Muslims in Arabic. The Abbasid Khalifa al-Mamun founded the famous House of Wisdom in Baghdad in 830 AD as an institute of translation and learning. Eminent thinker Al-Kindi (795-866) was a master of Greek philosophy, and introduced philosophical concepts that affected Islamic theology (*ilm-e-kalam*) for centuries to come. His attitude was that a philosophical approach can reinforce the truth of the articles of faith found in the Holy Quran.

The Western philosophy, mostly developed among the Christians, became a challenge for Christian theologians to defend their beliefs rooted in the Bible. The French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), the eminent German thinkers like Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Hegel (1770-1831) had a deep influence on the Western thought. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe was going through political, economical and social transformations. Scientific theory of evolution, developed by the English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809-82), became a dilemma for theologians who had preached the Biblical story of Creation that the universe, including human race, was created in seven days in a very specific sequence. Even the 19th century economical theories, like John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism influenced the moral and religious concept of good and bad. If all that promotes pleasure, or reduces pain is right, then the very basis of some religious meritorious works such as sacrifice and suffering was negated. The Western philosopher Nietzsche took one step further by eroding religious merits of meekness and humility. He called these values as products of European "slave-morality." Consequently, pleasure seeking trends and sensuality enhanced in the West.

Philosophy has several branches. For example, the nature of 'existence', or reality of 'being' is examined in the field of metaphysics. To inquire into the nature of knowledge, falls under epistemological discussions. How to reason correctly,



In India, the Muslim scholars and reformers could not match the intellectual superiority of Western philosophers, and they started to revise some basic doctrines of Islam or to deny their validity.

and to reach valid conclusions, is subject of logic. Aesthetics deals with the nature of beauty; and ethics is the study of moral values of human conduct. Philosophy also exerts to analyze religious beliefs. The philosophy of religions tends to validate the beliefs and practices that conform to rationality, but rejects the tenets that may not stand the test of reasoning. Theologian and religious schol-

ars employ philosophical norms and methods to prove the truthfulness of faith related matters. However, the philosophers may not find some religious ideas as truth, and they tend to disapprove them.

In India, the Muslim scholars and reformers could not match the intellectual superiority of Western philosophers, and they started to revise some basic doctrines of Islam or to deny their validity.

One group adopted “Naturalism” — the Philosophy of Nature — as their guiding tool to reinterpret all religious thoughts. They claimed to gain trustworthy knowledge of moral and religious truths only by studying all natural objects through scientific approach. This “Naturalist” philosophy upheld the position that there was nothing more than “Nature”, and all basic truths were truths of Nature. All truths, therefore, should be validated by reference to natural process of cause and effect. In other words, they rejected all that was considered “supernatural”, because it could not be experimented upon — a mystery beyond observation and control. They asserted that matter was the only reality, and that all that existed, including human consciousness, was a manifestation of matter, and obeyed the laws of nature. Clearly, this trend was leading its followers to agnosticism and atheism. God was replaced by “Nature”, and natural science became the Ultimate Judge for truth.

Then there were others, such as the Indian Muslim reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), who held to the doctrines of Islam, but denied the validity of some of its important beliefs, such as the belief in existence of angels, and acceptance of prayer by God. For him reason alone was a sufficient guide. He wrote a book entitled “*Ad-dua wal-istijabat*” where he expressed the view that God did not interfere in the laws of nature, everything seemed predetermined, and therefore, prayer was merely a formality, a part of ritual worship. He argued that only under a natural impulse the believers resorted to prayer at a time of need, but the prayer did not bring any real change; what was to happen would happen anyway. Similarly, another Muslim scholar of eminence, Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), wrote several books under the influence of the Western philosophy, including *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed* (1873), *The Spirit of Islam* (1891), and *The Ethics of Islam* (1893), where he suggested modifications to the religion of Islam to make it acceptable in the West. In the Preface of his book *The Spirit of Islam*, he declared: “The Islam of Mohammad, with its stern discipline and its severe morality, has proved itself the only practical religion for low natures, to serve them from drift-

ing into lawless materialism. It is probable, however, that should the creed of the Arabian Prophet receive acceptance among European communities, such of the rigid formalism which has been imparted to it by the lawyers of Central Asia and Irak will have to be abandoned.”

In response to such diversion from Islamic beliefs and practices under the impact of the Western philosophy, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (peace be on him) (1835-1908) wrote extensively and persuasively, utilizing the means of reasoning and rationality. He could see that the Muslim intellectuals were suffering from a defeatist mentality. To establish the existence of One God, reality of angels, and acceptance of prayer, he demonstrated their reality by providing personal proofs of receiving God’s revelations, having contact with the angels and his prayers being answered. He did not deny the importance of logical reasoning and use of rationality; he rather based all his conclusions on cogent arguments. However, he did not limit his claims to natural sources only; he was ever ready to prove that there was much beyond material existence, and that there was a paranormal world. He made it clear that reasoning and intellect played important roles in finding the truth, but these human faculties had limitations. He acknowledged the importance of observation and experiment, but did not confine the experiencing of the truth only through materialistic sources. Observations and experiments depend on the use of human senses, and at times human senses do receive subtle knowledge and full conviction through paranormal sources as well. In other words, reasoning and rationality need further reinforcement supplied by divinely inspired revelation and vision. To provide evidence of the truthfulness of his arguments, he gave examples of his personal experiences of receiving revelations, and presentation of miraculous signs. In addition, he made many prophecies based on the knowledge given to him by God, and those prophecies came to pass.

He rebutted the erroneous opinions of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in a booklet entitled *Barakatud Dua* (1893). He argued that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s assertion of “preordained” matters, equating the effects of Prayer with the effects of medi-

cation. If all was preordained, then there was no need to undergo any medical treatment. He explained that “predestination” did not preclude the use of human faculties or the power of God. In his booklet, he wrote that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan himself was unaware of the true philosophy of prayer and had no personal experience of its immense effectiveness. In his opinion it was a great mistake of Sir Syed’s that he acknowledged the physical system, but denied the spiritual system. He declared: “God has sent me as a reformer of this age so that such mistakes as these could be removed from the ideology of the Muslims, and that the non-believers be offered the proof of the True and Living God, and that the truth and greatness of Islam be proved through fresh signs.”

Concerning the existence of angels, he wrote: “Those people are to be pitied who, by being affected by the darkness of false philosophy, deny the existence of angels and satans, and reject the clear texts and proofs presented in the Holy Quran, and foolishly fall into the pit of heresy.”... “The external means which affect our spirituality and fulfill our spiritual needs, as the sun and the moon and the elements help us with regard to our spiritual needs, are known by the name of angel.” [*A’ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza’in*, vol. 5, pp. 134-135 Footnote]

Concerning revelations, he wrote: “As God has invested man with the faculty of reasoning for understanding, to some degree, of elementary matters, in the same way God has vested in him a hidden faculty of receiving revelation. When human reason arrives at the limit of its reach, then at that stage God Almighty, for the purpose of leading His true and faithful servants to the perfection of understanding and certainty, guides them through revelation and visions. Thus the stages which reason could not reach are traversed by means of revelation and vision, and seeker after truth thereby arrives at full certainty.” ♦ [*Surma Chashm Arya, Ruhani Khaza’in*, vol. 2, p. 87]

Imam Mubasher Ahmad is Missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the Midwest Region.

A Message Regarding Islam

*To Whom It May Concern,
Salaams (or salutations to All)*

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, a well known theologian and Missionary of Islam connected with the Ahmadiyya Movement, is now amongst you. If you have not seen or heard him just drop a letter to him asking him for some literature or information about his mission and you are sure to get a reply from him. His very printed letterheading will give you an impression of what he is and for what he stands. You will find a neat little block of his photo printed at the corner which will tell its own tale. Face is the index of character and so for a physiognomist it will speak volumes of the latent light which he carries in his person.

In the beginning you will find the greeting of "As-Salam-o-Alaikum." i.e., peace be upon you, one and all. This is one of the commandments of Islam. Peace includes all sorts of peace, peace of mind, peace of body, peace of individuals and of nations. Peace, as you know, is such an important thing that it may be called the very desideratum of human life. Peace is self-protection or self-defense and if you go a little further you will find peace an absolute or the biological necessity for the development of the whole world. You have made Peace Societies in America to espouse its cause, but the Mufti will tell you that this peace is the best watchword and the only form of salutation in Islam and far superior to all known forms of salutes including the time-indicating "Good Morning," "Good evening," "Good Night" and so on. The Mufti will tell you that he preaches no new religion but the one and same which all prophets professed from Adam to our Lord Muhammad (peace be with his soul).

Islam is the only religion on Earth which verifies the divine mission of all the prophets, for instance-Moses the lawgiver, Abraham

the Patriarch, Jesus Christ, etc. According to Islam all of them were Moslems and all proclaimed throughout the unity of God which is *sine qua non* in Islam. As there is a process of slow but constant construction and destruction in all earthly things; and old order changes giving place to new, it is but natural that laws pertaining to religion may also be revised, consolidated, amended and repealed from time to time just as our man made laws are subject to periodical changes to meet the requirements of the time. As in earthly laws, the basic principle remains intact: say for instance, the constitution or the form of government; so the fundamental principle of a religion such as in Islam is the Unity of God remains unaltered. Methods may differ but the aim is always one and the same.

Islam is not a self-made religion but it claims to be as old as the world itself. Even the Angels above proclaim and profess Islam and nothing else. Islam has stood the test of all countries and it spread into India, China and elsewhere by meek and humble Moslems and never by Government aid or through the influence of wealthy Missionaries. Islam does its work automatically once it is introduced properly. The diamond, while buried in the earth, was apparently of no more value than a common stone. It was when it was brought out from the mines and polished and cut and put in a position to catch the rays of light so that it could be shown off as its true worth that it was fully appreciated. It is just so with Islam. The Mufti represents Islam and the rays of light are reflected by his journal *the Moslem Sunrise* (4448 Wabash Ave, Chicago, IL, U.S.A.)

Islam is the only religion on earth that can stand the strictest test of Science. It has nothing to recast or reshape like other religions to make it science-proof. Islam is the only cure for Materialism which has sprung up owing to the conflict between Science and Religion. Every word of Koran bears the scientific truth hitherto known to man and if anybody who knows the modern science reads it carefully he will find copious matter in it to testify that only God can thus reveal such scientific truths and nobody else. It is not the place to give or quote verses now. I quote here however; a few of many virtues of Islam just to convince those who have not known Islam through original sources. Just look at the prohibition

of drinking in the United States by law. Islam has had this law since the 13th century and a little more. Gambling is equally prohibited by Islam and the day is not distant when the characteristic features of Islam will be adopted by all civilized governments. The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam was the first to congratulate America on its prohibition of drinking and I believe through Mufti Saheb who was then in England.

Islam is an ideal religion and is such as no human mind can invent a better. It has every virtue of Socialism. Islam preaches equality and brotherhood. It does not favor in the least color, race or creed distinctions. Islam is a cosmopolitic religion and can make its home everywhere. It is as pleasing to the Princes as it is to the hewers of wood and carriers of water. Verily Islam is the source of happiness in the world and after. All its religious observances aim toward the health and happiness of its followers. Islam never expects you to look on the world with disdain and do penances or suffer hardships or any unnatural thing. It has no forced dogmas or any mysterious thing. It is a plain, simple and naked truth.

It is true that our Mufti is not backed by huge funds or magnates and plutocrats and must be living plainly therefore, not in the palatial or sky scraper buildings and hence would not be in a position to spend lavishly in his propaganda. But you must realize this fact, that all great achievements in the domain of science or religion were only made by plain livers and high thinkers. The day is not distant when Islam will count in America in its fold many worthy sons of America. Islam never tells you to reject the prophethood of Jesus Christ. Islam is a Monotheism and says he was not son of God but the son of Mary. Islam rejects Trinity which is undoubtedly a man-made theory and is not to be found in the words of Christ or of Moses in his Old Testament.

May God give light to all those who wish to follow the right path and as Koran says "There is no compulsion in religion" and therefore Truth must bring into God's path by scientific reasoning and good speeches.

Peace be unto you.

Qazi A. Latif, M.A., Ph. D., Journalist



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edition of the
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Terrorism Didn't Cause These Twisted Acts

By Qasim Rashid, Richmond, Virginia

In response to my Correspondent of the Day letter, "This Airplane Wasn't a Terror Attack," at least two letters have been printed telling me I am wrong. I cannot express my joy at reading these letters, for they struck at the underlying issue I sought to address. The fact is, I hope I am wrong.

When Fox News, Time, and Vanity Fair labeled Major Nidal Hasan a terrorist while Joseph Stack received a "True American Hero" Facebook group, I admit I was perturbed. After all, both Stack and Hasan acted alone in a twisted and violent approach to resolve their issues. Yet, the former received outright condemnation, and rightfully so, while the latter sacrificed for all of us (as some held). However, to see a pronounced response from my fellow citizens telling me the two are one and the same provides reassurance that our nation does not equate Islam with terrorism.

As Linda J. Staples so eloquently concluded her letter, "Muslim or non-Muslim is not the issue." She could not be more right. Few people recall that convicted domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh, a Catholic, requested a Catholic priest to read him his last rites upon execution. Correctly, no one ascribes McVeigh's actions to Christian teachings. The terrorist actions of the KKK, a group composed entirely of Christians, have never once been considered justified as Christian teachings, thankfully. Likewise, the 9/11 attackers were vile terrorists and nothing more. To ascribe their actions to Islam promotes only misunderstanding, discord, and is flat out wrong.

I encourage Staples and those like her to continue to clarify the difference between Islam and terrorism for such clarifications truly benefit our great nation. After all, she is certainly correct. Muslim or non-Muslim is not the issue.

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edition of *The Register Citizen*

Jihad for minaret ban?

By Zahir Mannan,
Middletown, Connecticut

Does the banning of minarets alone warrant jihad? Islam says no.

In fact, the Quran prohibits warfare except in defense (22:40) or upholding religious freedom (2:194). Minarets themselves are not mandatory mosque structures. During the lifetime of Muhammad, mosques were built without minarets. Switzerland is the home of 400,000 Muslims and nearly 200 mosques. On what grounds, then, can Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi wage jihad against Switzerland while his own country exudes evidence of religious intolerance? The U.S. State Department reports that Libya severely restricts the religious freedoms of non-Muslim religious communities.

As a leader, Gaddafi should call for inter-faith understanding in Libya before waging war against a country much more conscious of religious freedom than his own.

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2010 edition of the
Scientific American

"Save the Planet"

By Sohail Husain,
Yale University, School of Medicine

Among several reasons cited in favor of educating women in "How Women Can Save the Planet," Lawrence Krauss correctly states that educated women "are less likely to accept fundamentalist extremism." I believe that it is especially important for Muslim groups such as the



Taliban to know that the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, 1400 years ago told his followers that they could earn paradise by educating their daughters. Could we all not come closer to a more peaceful society, a paradise on earth, by rediscovering the wisdom of educating the women of our planet?

Islam and Muslims Should Not Scare You

Published in *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 3, 2010

By Amjad Mahmood Khan

The image of American Muslims is in serious disrepair. A January 2010 Gallup poll found that almost half of Americans hold an unfavorable view of Islam. About the same number of Americans harbor personal prejudice toward Muslims, according to the poll. These numbers become especially troubling when we consider that two-thirds of the Americans polled admit to knowing little to nothing about Islam.

Why are many Americans distrustful of a religion and people they know very little about?

People tend to fear what they do not understand. Americans, for the most part, have been brought up in a Christian society. They might not agree with it, but they are familiar with it and thus tend not to feel threatened by it. Because Islam is still a minority religion in America and has had little positive public exposure, Americans have built up a strong distrust of it.

Islam deserves a media makeover. At a time when the United States is mired in two wars in locations where the majority of the people practice Islam, the future of American-Islamic relations is at stake.

The behavior of some radical self-proclaimed “Muslims” does not help public perception. Each time a terrorist commits a suicide bombing in a hospital, or a religious cleric issues a fatwa against Mickey Mouse, or Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad denies the Holocaust after 9/11, another American grows weary of Islam and Muslims.

Those familiar with Islam understand that these acts are not representative of the religion and shouldn’t be associated with mainstream Islam. The rest of the US does not. Reporting the acts of a handful of radical Muslims as if they are accurate portrayals of Islam would be akin to intimating that every priest involved in a scandal accurately represented Roman Catholicism.

The behavior of ideologues who capitalize on ratings or attention from fueling the fire against Islam does not help US public perception, either. Each time Pat Robertson refers to



Muslims as “fascists,” or Ann Coulter calls Islam “a car-burning cult,” it may get ratings but, more than anything, it damages America’s perspective on Islam and Muslims. Then there is the behavior of media pundits beholden to the 24-hour news cycle. Each time CNN runs a story on the self-proclaimed “Jihad Jane” or Fox News sounds off about Saudi women who can’t drive, without including an expert interview from someone who can clearly explain cultural context, another American grows weary of Islam and Muslims.

Again and again it plays out: An extremist commits an atrocity in Islam’s name; a non-Muslim ideologue typecasts the act as representative of Islam; and a media pundit cements the stereotype. This vicious cycle must end if attitudes toward Islam and Muslims are to improve. Of course, it begins within Muslim communities and countering extremists with education, but education in the US is also required.

Americans deserve to hear a more accurate portrayal of a religion and people that account for a fifth of the world’s population. Thousands of American Muslims are fighting gallantly to defend America in Iraq and Afghanistan. The West (even the Vatican) praise the ethical principles behind Islamic banking services. There is a thriving literary and artistic tradition within Islam. For example, American Muslims have made remarkable

contributions to such diverse fields as jazz (Yusuf Lateef), photojournalism (Adrees Latif) and miniature art (Saira Wasim).

Islam is host to moderate and vibrant minority communities. For example, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community—a dynamic, fast-growing international revivalist movement within Islam—is America’s first Muslim organization (founded in 1920) and has vociferously denounced violent “jihad” as a grave sin. American Muslims collaborate with individuals of all faiths and traditions to improve their local communities on a regular basis. Here in Los Angeles, the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement at the University of Southern California has been at the forefront of promoting mutual understanding. Yet all of this gets lost in a wave of negative headlines.

Extreme personalities have painted Islam with broad strokes, and much—though not all—of the media have allowed them to. This must change.

Whose burden is that? The news media bear the primary responsibility. Isn’t one of the main purposes of the media to empower citizens to make informed decisions concerning their democracy? Sensationalizing or even mischaracterizing incidents can greatly influence how citizens treat one another; it can also influence US policy.

By leaving out the full picture, the news media can ultimately inflame public outrage to such an extent as to facilitate ill-conceived legislation or engender popular vigilantism against American Muslims. To be sure, it is a difficult time in the US for journalism. In the 24/7 news and Internet age, newspapers and TV news stations fight for their survival by becoming as attractive to viewers as possible. But that doesn’t have to mean accuracy should suffer.

The solution is rather simple: The news media should make a concerted effort to get comments from American Muslims to help give context when reporting on Islam and the multitude of voices and movements within the religion. That way Americans will understand that most American Muslims are as aghast as they are every time there is a “jihad” against America.

There are plenty of American Muslim journalists and commentators willing to help put the news in perspective. In order to repair the image of American Muslims and fix the misperception problem, the media must work harder to help make the unfamiliar feel familiar.

Among the Dervishes

By O. M. Burke

First published in 1973

Reviewed by Shazia Sohail

Among the Dervishes is an account of the travels of Omar Michael Burke, a man determined to perfect his knowledge about the mystical tradition, or cult, of Sufism. He travels far, wide, and certainly deep, to not only inquire about, but to live, practice, and experience the treasure house of Sufi knowledge scattered across Asia, Africa, and Europe.

One is impressed by Burke's eagerness to believe that the answer to the profoundest question related to the metaphysical realm is to be found by living among the dervishes, who adopt extreme austerity as a stage in the process to learning about being a Sufi. His refreshing openness of mind, and complete lack of bias yields priceless nuggets of information that even the author fails to appreciate the value of at the time.

Among the Dervishes reads like an unsolved verbal jigsaw puzzle where all the right questions have been asked and all the right answers have been provided, but the

questions have not yet been linked to their respective answers. Also, somewhere in the middle of the book the author informs us about the far-reaching Sufi statement: "We have taken the kernel of the Koran and rejected the husk." Therein lies the root of the confusion and the apparent complexity and inexplicability of the Sufi order.

The author painstakingly tries to figure out the definition of the Perfect, or Complete, man and finds bits and pieces of the definition here and there. When you put all the pieces together it reads something like "The Perfect or Complete man, after acquiring complete knowledge of what is right and what is wrong has total ability to act upon this knowledge, due to an inner stillness acquired through the practice of intense self-discipline. The Perfect man enjoys complete independence from, rather abhorrence to, the good opinion of others, and exhibits supernatural powers periodically."

Burke sets out to solve a mystery and succeeds in collecting an abundance of clues. Anyone with the knowledge of the Qur'an and some religious history can join the dots and form a fairly accurate picture of the over-arching divine plan. Quite casually, in the middle of the book, he mentions that, around the area of Herat, Afghanistan, he comes across a village of some one thousand people who claim to be the followers of Jesus the son of Mary, of 'Nazara', the Kashmiri, who had come and lived among them after he migrated from Palestine. At the end of the book he provides another clue that Afghans also refer to themselves as "Bani Israel" or the "Children of Israel."

Little did he know that because of these chance discoveries his book would become one of the most widely quoted accounts on the subject of the fate of Jesus Christ after crucifixion since it validates both the Qur'an and the Bible. The Qur'an states, "And We made the son of Mary and his mother a Sign, and gave them refuge on an elevated land of *green* valleys and springs of running water" (23:51). Israel does not fit the description of lofty ground with springs and valleys and "refuge" implies that they travelled. Kashmir, in the north of India, fits the description perfectly.

In John (10:16), Jesus gives an indica-

tion that he would go in search of those Israelite tribes that had been lost to Israel and find them. He also says "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country" (Matt 13:57). From the evidence provided by Burke one has to conclude that Jesus did go after the *Lost Sheep of Israel*, the Afghans, who still refer to themselves as *Bani-Israel*. Burke also informs us that from the oral accounts of these Afghan Christians he gathered that Jesus had been there in his youth as well, before his crucifixion. Thus he knew he would be honored if he left his own country and went after the lost Israelite tribes.

The Christians that Burke found in Afghanistan referred to themselves as Muslim and "regarded baptism, the Holy Ghost and the Kingdom of God to be three stages in a system of human illumination." Interestingly enough, the man who first brought to light the facts about Jesus Christ's deliverance from the cross and migration to Kashmir, and travel to its surrounding area, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, and who also claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Jesus the Muslims are awaiting, also interpreted Islamic teachings in a similar manner. He also taught that there were three stages of spiritual development, with the final stage closely resembling Burke's definition of the Perfect or Complete Man. The man who has attained the final stage called 'the Soul at Rest,' experiences 'Heaven on Earth', which could also be referred to as the Kingdom of God.

These are just a few examples of the connections to be made in 'Among the Dervishes.' There are many more to be made by an interested reader since the development of Sufi rituals, practices, and lore is guided by centuries' worth of intuition and experience, and Islam claims to be closest to human nature, for the Qur'an advises us to "follow the nature made by Allah," since "that is the right religion" (30:31). One comes across several practices, like the whirling of the dervishes that try to take the short cut to sublime sensations and circumvent the process of attaining nearness to God through service of humanity. But, as one of Burke's Sufi friends puts it in the words of Rumi, "It is only because there is such a thing as real gold that people are taken in by counterfeit."

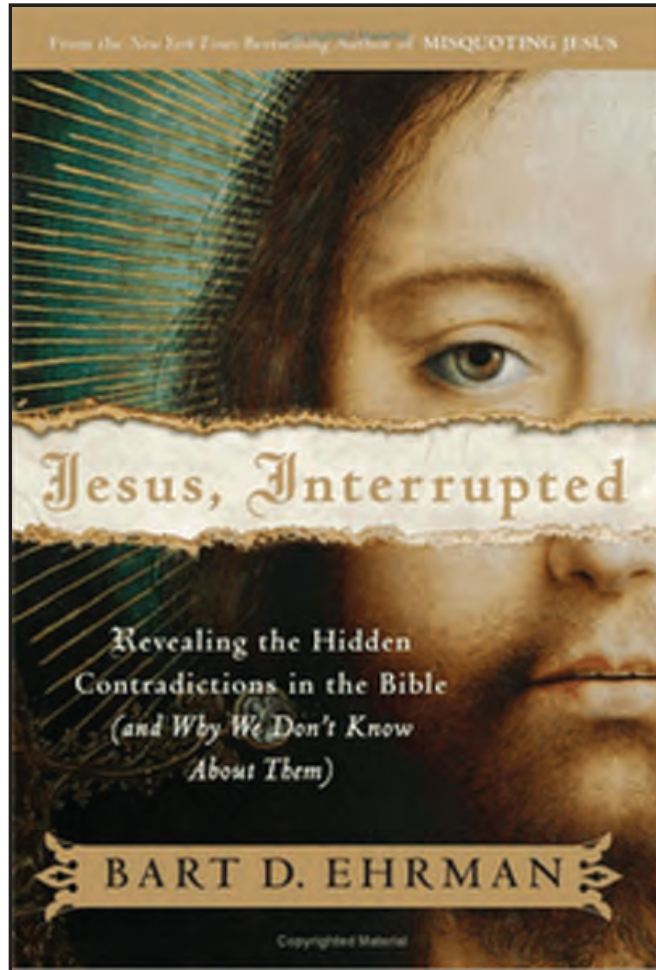
By Zia H Shah MD

This is a book by Professor Bart Ehrman. It was published in 2009 and has gathered considerable popularity in the United States. Some parts of the book can be read online.¹

Ehrman is an American New Testament scholar and textual critic of early Christianity. He is the James A. Gray, distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He writes about the early Christians, using the term “proto-orthodox” to describe the Christian traditions that would later be defined as orthodox. He describes first and second century Christians as not yet having a unified, orthodox tradition.^{2 3} He has been teaching New Testament for more than 27 years now. His criticism of the New Testament is at its best when examined in light of the Muslim paradigm as defined in a book *Christianity: a journey from fact to fiction* and a companion article about the early Christians in this volume of Muslim Sunrise.^{4 5} The Holy Qur’an states:

“We (Allah) caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light, fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Torah, and a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing.” (Al Qur’an 5:47)

The Qur’an is also quick to point out that the previous Scriptures have suffered interpolations and perversions at the hands of their scribes.⁶ “Woe, therefore, to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, ‘This is from Allah,’”(Al Qur’an 2:80). Until the last century the Christian apologists used to insist that the Bible is the literal word of God. The modern scholarship of the Biblical scholars, however, has confirmed the Qur’anic claims, made centuries earlier.



Great Revolt. So, the canonical gospels were not only influenced by whatever written tradition existed before, including letters of Paul, possibly the Q document (that may have been the actual *Injil*),⁷ but also the oral traditions.

In a companion article about a PBS documentary, *From Jesus to Christ: the Early Christians*, I have discussed some of the early history of Christianity and how important it is to fully understand the Qur’anic verses about Christianity and Jesus, may peace be on him. In that documentary describing the oral traditions it is said:

“It appears that in between the death of Jesus and the writing of the first gospel, Mark, that they clearly are telling stories. They’re passing

A Book Review:

Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don’t Know About Them)

None of the gospels were written until after the Great Revolt in 70 AD. So, inevitably their composition and selection was intertwined with political concerns and philosophies. Jesus^{as} was put on the cross around year 30 AD and the first of the Gospels namely of Mark was not written until 40 years later after the

on the tradition of what happened to Jesus - what he stood for and what he did - orally, by telling it and retelling it. Meeting in each others homes, early Christians told stories of Jesus’ parables and miracles and of his suffering and death. These were not historical accounts, but shared memories

shaped by a common past. Legend and myth and hymn and prayer are the vehicles in which oral traditions develop. One could, for example, imagine that the oldest way in which the early Christians told about Jesus' suffering and death was the hymn that Paul quotes in Philippians 2."⁸

The Holy Qur'an affirms the truth of all the previous revelations, which include those given to Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as}. However, the Qur'an also points out that all the previous books were sent for specific nations and times. As those books were not final and universal, they were not provided the special protection against interpolations, as was granted to the Holy Qur'an, which was revealed as the Final Guidance for all peoples and times.⁹ The Christian scholars today are confirming what the Holy Qur'an had claimed about the Bible 14 centuries ago. Some of the evidence has been examined in an article, Banned from the Bible before.¹⁰ The whole of Ehrman's book is about contradictions in the Bible, but more specifically there is a 40 page chapter titled *A world of contradictions*. It starts as follows:

"When students are first introduced to the historical, as opposed to a devotional, study of the Bible, one of the first things they are forced to grapple with is that the biblical text, whether Old Testament or New Testament, is chock full of discrepancies, many of them irreconcilable. Some of these discrepancies are simple details where one book contradicts what another says about a minor point-the number of soldiers in an army, the year a certain king began his reign, the details of an apostle's itinerary. In some cases seemingly trivial points of difference can actually have an enormous significance for the interpretation of a book or the reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel or the life of the historical Jesus. And then there are instances that involve major issues, where one author has one point of view on an important topic (How was the world created? Why do the people of God suffer? What is the significance of Jesus' death?), and another author has another. Sometimes these views are simply different from one another, but at other times they are directly at odds.

"In this chapter I will talk about some of the important and interesting discrepancies of the Bible that emerge when it is examined from a historical perspective. Since my specialty is the New Testament, I will be dealing with the kinds of problems that are found there. But you can rest assured that very much the same problems can be found in the Old Testament as well-in fact, even more so. Whereas the New Testament, consisting of twenty-seven books, was written by maybe sixteen or seventeen authors over a period of seventy years, the Old Testament, the Jewish Scriptures, consist of thirty-nine books written by dozens of authors over at least six hundred years. There is a lot of room for differing perspectives, and if you look for them, you will find them in droves."

Many of the contradictions in the four gospels are not trivial but have profound bearing on the Christian doctrines. The very first discrepancy or contradiction that he describes between Mark and John is apparently minor pertaining to the day Jesus^{as} was put on the cross but it takes a sudden turn like a mystery thriller and suddenly the plot thickens. What is at stake? The whole of Christianity is up for grabs in one little detail! Was it Thursday afternoon or Friday morning? The book of Mark is generally considered the most factually reliable of the four gospels. It was written around 70 CE, roughly four decades after the Crucifixion. That's a long lag, but it offers less time for the accrual of dubious information than the roughly five decades available for Matthew and Luke or the six or seven decades for John. What's more, during Mark's composition there would have been people sixty or seventy years old who as young adults had personally

witnessed the doings and sayings of Jesus^{as} and knew his biographical details - and whose recollections may have constrained the author's inventiveness. This population would shrink during the decade or more before other gospels took shape, expanding creative freedom. Ehrman explains:

"And so the contradiction stands: in Mark, Jesus eats the Passover meal (Thursday night) and is crucified the

The whole of Ehrman's book is about contradictions in the Bible, but more specifically there is a 40 page chapter titled *A world of contradictions*.

following morning. In John, Jesus does not eat the Passover meal but is crucified on the day before the Passover meal was to be eaten. Moreover, in Mark, Jesus is nailed to the cross at nine in the morning; in John, he is not condemned until noon, and then he is taken out and crucified.

"What is one to make of this contradiction? Again, on one level it seems like a rather minor point. I mean, who really cares if it was one day or the next? The point is that Jesus got crucified, right?

"Well, that is both right and wrong. Another question to ask is not 'Was Jesus crucified?' but also 'What does it mean that Jesus was crucified?' And for this, little details like the day and time actually matter. The way I explain the importance of such minutiae to my students is this: When, today, a homicide is committed, and the police detectives come in to the crime scene, they begin searching for little scraps of evidence, looking for the trace of a fingerprint or a strand of hair on the floor. Someone might

reasonably look at what they are doing and say, 'What's wrong with you? Can't you see that there's a dead body on the floor? Why are you snooping around for a fingerprint?' Yet sometimes the smallest clue can lead to a solution of the case. Why, and by whom, was this person killed? So, too, with the Gospels. Sometimes the smallest piece of evidence can give important clues about what the author thought was really going on.

"I can't give a full analysis here, but I will point out a significant feature of John's Gospel - the last of our Gospels to be written, probably some twenty-five years or so after Mark's. John is the only Gospel that indicates that Jesus is 'the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.' This is declared by John the Baptist at the very beginning of the narrative (John 1:29) and again six verses later (John 1:35). Why, then, did John - our latest Gospel - change the day and time when Jesus died? It may be because in John's Gospel, Jesus is the Passover Lamb, whose sacrifice brings salvation from sins. Exactly like the Passover Lamb, Jesus has to die on the day (the Day of Preparation) and the time (some-time after noon), when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple.

"In other words, John has changed a historical datum in order to make a theological point: Jesus is the sacrificial lamb. And to convey this theological point, John has had to create a discrepancy between his account and the others."¹¹

Ehrman tells us himself that his pursuit of different contradictions in the Bible is not petty or frivolous:

"I further came to see that these differences related not just to small details here and there. Sometimes different authors had completely different understandings of important issues: Was Jesus in doubt and despair on the way to the cross (Mark) or calm and in control (Luke)? Did Jesus' death provide an atonement for sin (Mark and Paul) or not (Luke)? Did Jesus perform signs to prove who he was (John) or did he refuse to do so (Matthew)? Must Jesus' followers keep the law if they are to enter the Kingdom (Matthew) or absolutely not (Paul)?"¹²

The book of Acts as a whole is a narrative of what happened to and among

Jesus' followers after his crucifixion. There are very basic contradictions in description of St. Paul by others in the Book of Acts and his autobiographical account in his letters or Epistles. Bart Ehrman has devoted at least 6 pages to these set of contradictions.¹³

There are several interviews of the author describing parts of the book on Youtube.com.^{14 15}

EPILOGUE

His last chapter of the book is titled, *Is Faith Possible*. After exposing all the fundamental limitations of Christianity and the Bible, finally he is trying to extend an olive branch to the devout Christians. He writes:

"But the basic views that I've sketched here are widely known, widely taught, and widely accepted among New Testament scholars and their students, including the students who graduate from seminaries and go on to pastor churches. Why do these students so rarely teach their congregations this information, but insist instead on approach-ing the Bible devotionally rather than historical-critically, not just in the pulpit (where a devotional approach would be expected) but also in their adult education classes? That has been one of my leading questions since I started writing this book.

"Some pastors, of course, do try to convey their historical-critical knowledge of the Bible to members of their congregations-often with mixed results. Some parishioners are eager to learn all they can about what scholars are saying about the Bible, and others simply don't want to hear about it, perhaps because it is too complicated or, even more likely, too threatening to their faith."¹⁶

He suggests a middle way as he hedges his bets between agnosticism, which he himself practices and reformed Christianity. He writes:

"Perhaps pastors are afraid that if the person in the pew learns what scholars have said about the Bible, it will lead to a crisis of faith, or even the loss of faith. My personal view is that a historical- critical approach to the Bible does not necessarily lead to agnosticism or atheism. It can in fact lead to a more intelligent and thoughtful faith - certainly more intelligent and thoughtful than an approach to the Bible that overlooks all of the problems

that historical critics have discovered over the years."¹⁷

Bart Ehrman is absolutely right when he claims that all his scholarship, 'can in fact lead to a more intelligent and thoughtful faith,' and that religion, I think, is the religion of Islam. A religion founded in truth, nature and human conscience! May Allah be our Guide in our search for the Truth!

Zia H. Shah is a doctor practicing in sleep and lung disorders in upstate New York. Zia is also the editor of the Al-Islam eGazette, an international publication of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

Endnotes

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¹⁰ <http://www.alislam.org/egazette/articles/Banned-from-Bible-200905.pdf>

¹¹ Professor Bart Ehrman. *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Harper One, 2009. Pages 27-28

¹² Professor Bart Ehrman. *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Harper One, 2009. Pages 273.

¹³ Professor Bart Ehrman. *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Harper One, 2009. Pages 53-58.

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/>

¹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Trt1ZWR5PqQ>

¹⁶ Professor Bart Ehrman. *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Harper One, 2009. Pages 271-272.

¹⁷ Professor Bart Ehrman. *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Harper One, 2009. Page 272.



By Arif Humayun

Muslims who justify acts of terrorism – against non-Muslims or Muslims alike – under the misrepresented concepts of jihad, sharia, apostasy, blasphemy or any other religious guise belie the peaceful credentials of Islam. The recent arrest in Pakistan of five American Muslims for allegedly seeking to join the Taliban or al-Qaida in Afghanistan is particularly disturbing; it confirms that these flawed concepts – the root cause motivating Muslim youngsters towards radicalism – have not been effectively countered. Misrepresented Islamic teachings have been frequently exploited for political purposes and lie at the root of this intellectual confusion amongst Muslims. Practically speaking, Muslims are a diverse group with different sets of beliefs which are strongly influenced by their cultural, tribal and political affiliations. Many of the misrepresented concepts crept into the Muslim faith as a reaction to tectonic changes in the global economic base – transition from agrarian to industrial – that reversed the Muslim governments' global dominance. Such misrepresented concepts are the proverbial chinks in their ideological armor; rationalization of such distortions will make Islam a truly peaceful religion.

Practically speaking, Muslims are a diverse group with different sets of beliefs which are strongly influenced by their cultural, tribal and political affiliations.

Driven by the West, the transition to the industrial economy occurred over three to four centuries – a period generally referred to as *reformation* and *renaissance*. In addition to rationalizing myths, this change also reformed the Western educational system with a strong focus on science and technology. This was required to train their workforce to support the ever changing demands of the industrial economy. Sustaining this change required

The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 shattered the flawed two-nation theory; it established that East and West Pakistani Muslims were two separate nations and that religion alone does not define a nation!

continued scientific and technological development that has become the hallmark of the West. While this transformation was underway, Muslims were at the zenith of their power; they failed to appreciate its importance until it was too late. Thus, the Muslims' failure to lead the change to the industrial economy left them behind. This reversal in global dominance created deep seated animosity amongst Muslims who rejected everything Western as un-Islamic, even refusing to learn European languages!

Colonization of Muslim lands by emerging Western powers increased this acrimony. The Muslim clergy provided convoluted justifications urging people to wage Jihad against the enemy, recalling utopian images of past glory of the Muslim rule. The misrepresented concepts gradually proliferated in the Muslim psyche in the past 100 to 150 years and gained wider acceptance with time. Many so-called Islamic organizations across the Muslim world – Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami, and a myriad of similar political organizations – have exploited these misinterpretations for raising funds and recruits and resorting to terrorist acts to subdue their competition. The exploitation of these distorted concepts for defeating the Russians in Afghanistan in the 1980s acted as a catalyst for the rapid spread of this flawed ideology.

Shahzeb Khan (*An Ideology with Genes of Discord*, Dawn, Nov. 23, 2009) argues that every society consciously adopts an ideology which is interpreted and reinterpreted to seek a specific response from the people. A flawed ideology can become inherently dangerous if it carries genes of discord which, unfortunately, were contained in the ideology adopted to justify the creation of Pakistan. The two-nation theory highlighted religious identity and did not promote pluralistic attitudes; it relied solely on the imaginary walls erected be-

tween Muslims and non-Muslims claiming that Muslims were a separate nation and could not coexist with non-Muslims. Although Jinnah aspired for a secular country, as confirmed by his landmark speech after independence declaring equal rights for all citizens, the seeds of discord contained in that ideology enabled it to be exploited by latter-day theorists. This notion regimented the masses to make 'the Hindu', a non-Muslim, the object of their hatred. Episodes of violence from 1947 cemented their belief of hatred towards the non-Muslims — Hindus and Sikhs. The creation of Bangladesh in 1971 shattered the flawed two-nation theory; it established that East and West Pakistani Muslims were two separate nations and that religion alone does not define a nation!

The history of Pakistan thus presents a realistic case history to study the effect of ideology on the society. That flawed ideology has been repeatedly tweaked by interest groups to attain their objectives. Whenever expedient, the state exploited religion for political purposes and politicized the clergy in this process. Be it Ayub Khan's efforts to win elections against Fatimah Jinnah, or Z. A. Bhutto's land reforms, Zia's referendum to continue his authoritarian rule or Sharif's nuclear test explosions; at every significant juncture in Pakistan's political history, the national ideology was manipulated to win society's sanction.

The seeds of hatred based on the Hindu-Muslim divide to justify the creation of Pakistan germinated and spread to incite hatred against progressive Muslims groups as well. Distorted concepts of jihad, sharia, apostasy and blasphemy were used to provoke the emotional but largely uninformed masses to kill innocent people. This was clearly documented by the Pakistan Government's Inquiry Commission in 1954 (The Munir Commission Report). Radicalized Muslim clergy and terrorists

still use the same twisted logic to justify killing innocent people.

The same perverse rationale – that non-Muslims automatically are enemies of Muslims – was used to rally the believers against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. This was accomplished initially through Saudi Arabian funded *madrassas* (seminaries) in Pakistan where these distorted concepts of the Wahabbi ideology were drilled into young minds under the guise of Islamic education. This was later mandated in colleges – even engineering, medical and dental colleges – and also made an integral part of civil and military recruitment programs. The dominance by one Muslim ideology in Pakistan prompted others to enter the fray and resulted in increased polarization and sectarianism whereby each group condemned the other's beliefs and declared their 'competition' non-Muslim or apostates and justifying violence against them. The Iran-Iraq war promoted the Shia-Sunni divide and subsequent Islamization policies in Pakistan and other Muslim countries created the never-ending debate about who was rightfully a Muslim! These debates polarized society and created hordes of brainwashed *madrassa* students each supporting their respective viewpoints and reinforced the ranks of indoctrinated college and university students and civil and military personnel. Political outfits with extremist tendencies brainwashed marginalized members of society by exploiting the same binary structure of Muslims/non-Muslims which is being used against the US in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Poor governance and lack of meaningful economic opportunities, coupled with conspiracy theories that outside forces were out to destroy Islam and Pakistan created fertile ground for demands for the implementation of *sharia* to revive the utopian concept of Muslim community (*ummah*) which never existed as a political and geo-

graphic entity. Ironically, politicized clergy still aspire for a unified Muslim political entity or country with a large standing army ready to wage jihad to subdue the 'enemies of Islam'. In reality, a unified Muslim state existed only during the Prophet's lifetime; four elected Caliphs succeeded the Prophet as head of the government. Within a few decades of his death, the caliphate became hereditary and was held by the victor. Several independent Muslim countries emerged with the expanding empire and people of diverse backgrounds becoming its citizens. The Caliphate in the 9th and 10th century decided to develop laws based on the Qur'anic principles of equality, justice and peace that could be uniformly applied to its subjects. Sharia's ethos was to be egalitarian with provisions to protect the weak and no institution had any power to interfere in the personal decisions and belief of individuals. Scholars were charged with developing the Sharia Law that was implemented by political rulers. The Muslim Caliphate provided only spiritual guidance to Muslims who lived in independent political entities. The Caliphate and its spiritual bond with Muslim countries ended with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the colonization of the Muslim lands by the emerging industrial powers.

By separating the development of the law from its implementation, early Muslim governments had effectively separated religion from politics. To encourage diversity and independent analysis, several competing schools of scholars were allowed to flourish. Four such schools are still recognized by the Sunni Muslims and one or two by the Shia Muslims. These important distinctions are lost in today's demands for the implementation of sharia which, developed around the agrarian economic base, needs to be updated for the industrial economy. That will enable Muslim communities to develop and climb out of the intellectual backwaters. Alternately, secular constitutions have evolved that contain the essential elements of sharia and are equally effective in providing peace, equality and social justice to people in the industrial economy.

If the radicals' demand for their versions of sharia is granted – a very scary proposition – imagine a hypothetical Muslim country of a billion people structured on the Saudi Arabian, Taliban or al-Qaida's ideological model. What would this monolithic



Chinks

society be without any cultural activities? That would be absolutely counter to the pluralism and diversity in the Western world where individual freedoms, social justice and a peaceful and

prosperous environment is available to its citizens making the world a better and more livable place.

Muslims as a group are in a state of denial – many, including the clergy, either cast aside as aberrations or deny that the people responsible for horrendous terrorist attacks are good Muslims. Some cite poverty and lack of education for people joining the ranks of terrorists while others blame it on conspiracy theories. The almost routine suicide attacks on security forces and civilians in Pakistan, attacks on the headquarters of the Pakistan army and its intelligence agencies and the Pakistan Army's fight against the Taliban in Waziristan are blamed on conspiracy theories citing US, Israeli and Indian policies against Pakistan and the Muslim World. Al-Qaida and the Taliban are similarly dismissed as Western creations to malign Islam. These theories are easily rebuked by evidence that many of the terrorists have college degrees and come from middle class and affluent families. Those involved in the London and Spain train bombings, and the recently arrested US citizens of Pakistani and Middle Eastern descent, all educated in the US, aspiring to become jihadis in Afghanistan deflate the above assertions.

The chinks in the Muslims' ideological armor are well identified. Muslims must reject the flawed ideologies based on hatred; these

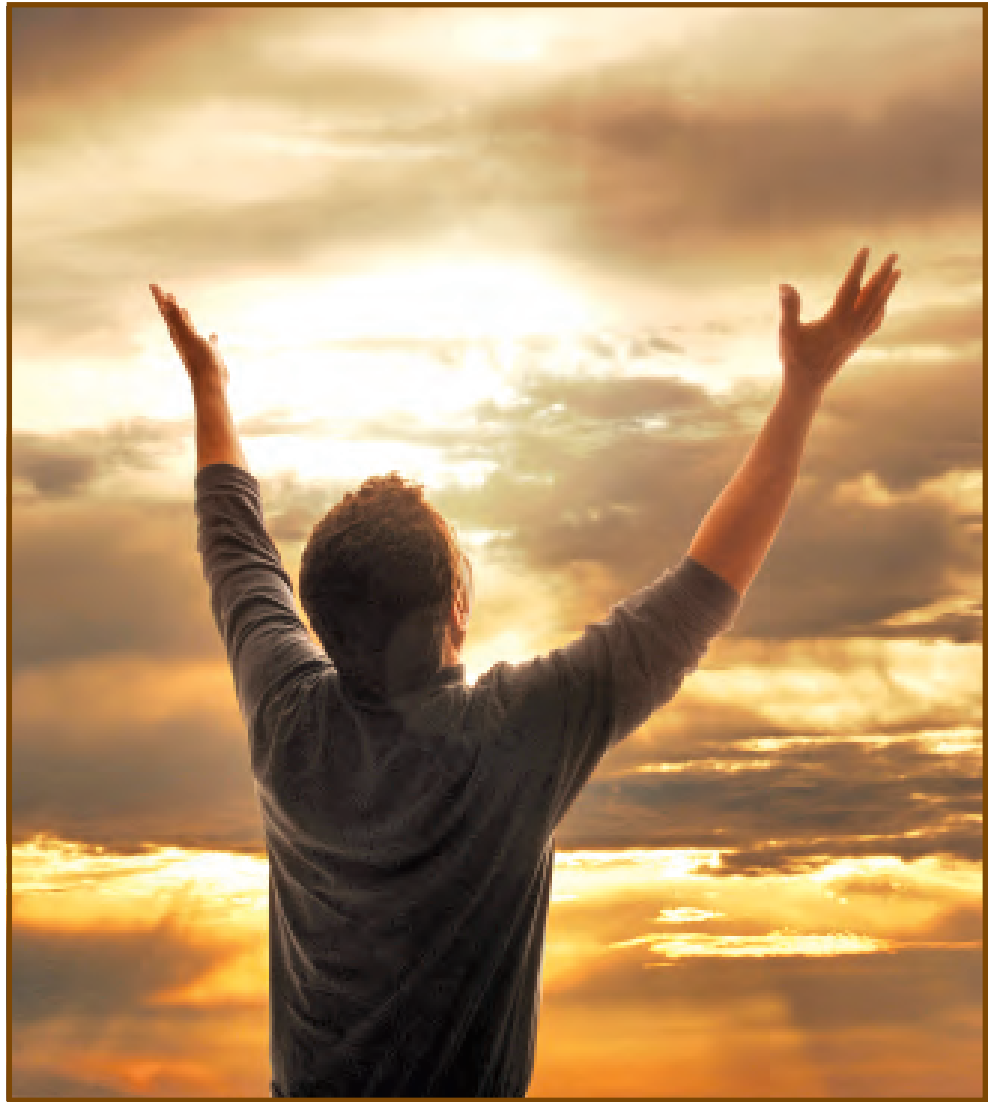
***Muslims
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or deny that
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for
horrendous
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distorted concepts are also inconsistent with Qur'anic teachings. Corrective actions must include rationalizing the twisted concepts of jihad, sharia, apostasy, blasphemy and community (*ummat*) in the Qur'anic sense without political agendas. That will truly make Islam a religion of peace and remove the proverbial chinks in its ideological armor!

Finding God in Light of the Writings of the Promised Messiah^{as}

By Atif Munawar Mir

Most religions describe God as an infinite reality, not bounded by time and space, and thus outside the grasp of the human mind. A great chasm separates the human mind and God. Can this gap be bridged and if so, how? Science is taking tiny steps forward but new scientific discoveries only confirm the depth and breadth of human ignorance. Since the development of modern science in the late 1600s, scientists and philosophers have attacked the idea of a god. They hold religion responsible for the oppression of humanity and want to replace religion with science as the supreme authority on human affairs. The idea that God does not exist became prevalent in the 19th century, which Nietzsche articulated in his famous phrase: “God is dead”.



In such context, Allah sent the Promised Messiah^{as}, who relied on *Surah Al-Takathur* to identify three tools that grant us certainty in the existence of Allah. These three tools are:

1. **Knowledge by way of inference,**
2. **Knowledge by way of sight and**
3. **Knowledge by way of experience.**

The degree of certainty these three tools provide varies. Knowledge by way of experience provides the highest degree of certainty in the existence of Allah followed by knowl-

edge by way of sight. Knowledge by way of inference is the inferior of the three forms of knowledge.

Knowledge by way of inference

The Promised Messiah^{as} says that knowledge of God by way of inference is knowledge based on reason and information.¹ When we see smoke from a distance, we infer the existence of fire. In a similar manner, when we see creation, we infer that there must be a creator. The sight of a sublime glacier melting

into rivers, which snake their way into the ocean, and then vaporize to form clouds and then fall back on earth in the form of rain or snow, is one of the many marvelous phenomena in the universe. To a curious mind, a natural question comes to mind. Who created this beautiful machinery of nature in such an artistic manner? Such breathtaking beauty helps us to infer that a supreme being exists who created the universe and the life in it. The challenge is to find this creator. How do we know where He is, and how do we know His attributes? Holy Scriptures and prophets point to the fact that the creator of the universe communicates with His creation. Muslims believe that the final scripture revealed to humanity is the Holy Qur'an. The teachings of this scripture were demonstrated by the Holy Prophet^{saw} in practice. The Holy Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad^{saw} offer indirect proof that Allah exists. Can we gain an even better knowledge of Allah? Yes. To understand Allah better, we need to rely on Allah's grace. We have to seek His help to develop knowledge about Him without any intermediary.

The Holy Qur'an states:

"Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Incomprehensible, the All-Aware", (6:104).

Knowledge by way of sight

We can say that we see God with our own eyes when God reveals Himself to us. No longer do we depend on logic and information to infer the existence of Allah. At this stage of knowledge, we do not see only the smoke, but also the fire.²

However, sometimes revelation is not a testimony of our righteousness, but is a motivation for us to become righteous. It is like when our parents show us a beautiful toy and take it back until we finish our homework. In a similar manner, God grants us revelation and shows Himself to us but he stops His revelations if we do not respond with an improved level of righteousness. In other words, if someone is blessed with revelation, it does not mean that the spiritual destination has arrived. It is more so that God has given us a glimpse of our destination so that we start traveling faster on the spiritual path.³

What is true revelation? The Promised

Messiah^{as} first explains what isn't revelation. Any brilliant idea of a scientist or philosopher cannot be termed as revelation. Otherwise, a thief who comes up with brilliant ideas of robbery will also be considered a recipient of revelation.⁴

The Promised Messiah^{as} describes true revelation as something that is not a product of our mind but a meaningful back-and-forth dialogue between Allah and his servant.⁵ Those who are blessed with revelation are few, because most of us choose material acquisitions over spiritual bounties. But once we have acquired the taste of genuine revelation, all worldly things become meaningless.⁶

Knowledge by way of experience

According to the Promised Messiah^{as}, revelation is open to us all. However we can only become worthy of it by becoming righteous. If revelation inspires righteousness in you then you become worthy of further revelations. Revelation and righteous actions reinforce each other and give us the highest level of certainty in the existence of Allah. At this stage of certainty, we feel the warmth of God in our hearts. It is as if we have become certain of fire by inserting our hand into the fire.

Since righteousness is a prerequisite for attaining certainty in the existence of God, we should know the meaning of righteousness. Righteousness, among other things, also means showing steadfastness in the face of misfortune. When great calamities enter the house of a righteous person, he does not "lose heart but says: Surely to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return. It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly and perfectly guided", (2:156-158).⁷

Observing steadfastness during extreme hardships allows man to arrive at the absolute certainty of the existence of Allah.

The Promised Messiah^{as} explains that when people show steadfastness and do not lose heart in the face of fear, hunger, suffering and loss of wealth, it is they who are blessed from God and are perfectly guided. Determination in the face of trials imprints divine attributes on their soul. At this stage, the knowledge is perfected through experience and moral qualities such as forbearance, become part of our personality.⁸

Why is steadfastness, in the face of suffering, necessary to gain absolute certainty in the existence of God? Steadfastness in bleak times proves that we love and worship Allah and not our desires.

The Promised Messiah^{as} calls steadfastness a moral quality when "*one suffers a loss one should consider it as rendering back to God that which He had bestowed, and should utter no complaint about it*".⁹ In other words, steadfastness is "*reconciliation with the divine will*".¹⁰

If we want to be filled with divine light, we must be ready to show steadfastness.¹¹

Conclusion

It is in our nature to seek. Some try to find happiness in money and possessions. Some try to find happiness in knowledge. Others seek satisfaction in relationships and friendships. Then there are those who find happiness in self-denial and self-mortification. According to the Holy Qur'an, true happiness comes when our souls are at peace. And our souls are at peace when the reality of Allah has penetrated into our soul, body and mind. You do not find God in physics laboratories or in mathematical formulae. You will find God in logic, historical knowledge and revelation but the absolute certain knowledge of God comes when we are righteous and hence we show steadfastness in the face of suffering. Steadfastness is one of the important keys that unlocks the door of our hearts and opens us up into the presence of Allah. It is interesting that scientists find logic to be the ultimate tool of knowledge. In Islam, steadfastness is an important tool that grants us knowledge of the infinite reality. Steadfastness and knowledge of God's existence are strongly intertwined in Islam.

(Footnotes)

¹ Ahmad, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam, "Sources of Divine Knowledge", Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, Islam International Publications Ltd, 1993, p. 99

² Ibid, 103

³ Ibid, 105

⁴ Ibid, 104

⁵ Ibid, 105

⁶ Ibid, 106

⁷ Ibid, 109-110

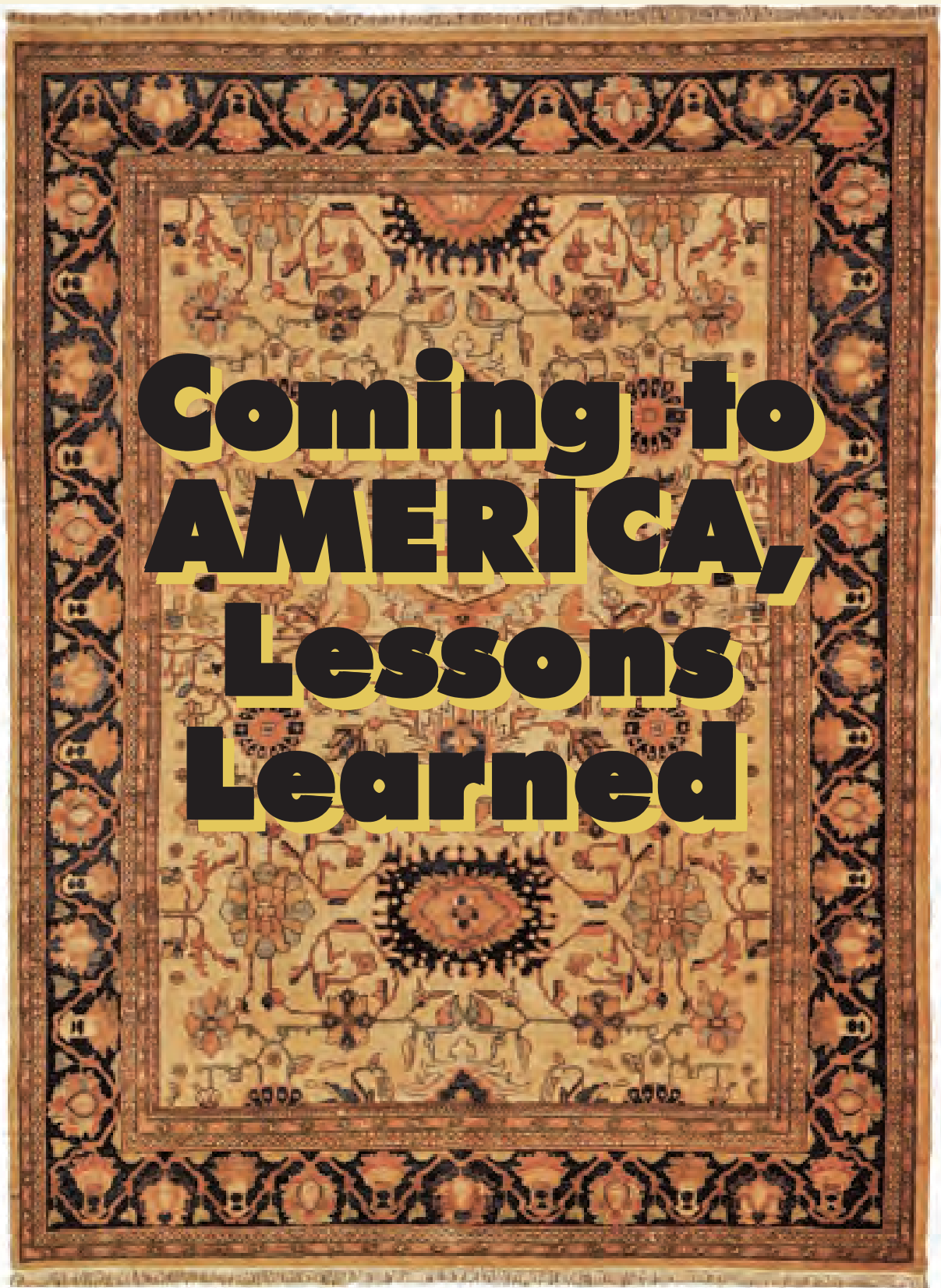
⁸ Ibid, 109-110

⁹ Ibid, 40

¹⁰ Ibid, 41

¹¹ Ibid, 111

Perspective



I belong to a unique generation. Although I belong to the baby-

boomer generation, being brought up in Pakistan, it was not a well-known term. I am one month older than the country of Pakistan. Being migrants to a new country and also in a town that was being established from scratch, literally from barren land, it was like living in the 19th century. I can really relate to a lot of things in a cowboy movie: the lanterns with kerosene oil, cooking over burning wood and streets without asphalt were all part of my life in the early years. Then we got electricity and later on natural gas, but still no indoor plumbing or television. All of a sudden, I moved to the 20th century in the USA. It was like going to sleep in 1866 in a small town in Nebraska and waking up in Chicago in 1966.

It was not only interesting but in a way adventurous to adopt the new culture, language, customs and even dietary differences. It is quite an adventure to try to eat a hot dog for the first time, let alone trying to struggle with its name. Or even trying to eat cold cuts which some of us former Pakistanis still cannot eat because they look like raw meat. Eating any meat that looks remotely raw in a third world country is like begging for an emergency room visit. Eating pasta was another story because in Pakistan we were used to eating pasta as a dessert made with sugar and milk.

Most of my generation still refers to Pakistan and India as its “home”. They have lived here, in the US, more years than anywhere else but it is still not *home*. In our conversations, we still hear the words “back home” in reference to Pakistan and India. I lived one month in British India, a little over eighteen years in Pakistan and 43 years in Chicago. I know where my home is. I’ve already bought the cemetery lot for myself here. I am here to stay.

Being brought up in an austere, religious town in Pakistan, discussions about religion could not be controlled because they were in our blood. This was a great conversational ice-breaker since most Americans in the sixties did not know anything about Islam. Moreover, trying to practice Islamic religious obligations wasn’t exactly easy in a culture of sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll. The hippie movement was in full swing and there was a sexual revolution going on. As a Muslim, one had to be on guard 24 hours a day.

Over a long period of time my knowledge and thinking about Christians, Jews, Hindus and even Muslims has evolved. Without compromising with the basic roots of Islamic teachings, the interaction with others and approach to solving the common social and political issues is

altogether different. I consider it improved.

Dealing with our society is different for our children. They have been part of American society since their birth. We like to talk in Urdu, Punjabi or in other ethnic languages we feel easy with. English is something we deal with because of necessity. It does not matter how well we have mastered the language or how comfortable we feel using it. When it comes to caroling, counting and cursing, there is nothing that gives you real satisfaction as your mother tongue. Our children don’t have that problem; their mother tongue is English, whether or not

Dealing with our society is different for our children. They have been part of American society since their birth. We like to talk in Urdu, Punjabi or in other ethnic languages we feel easy with. English is something we deal with because of necessity. It does not matter how well we have mastered the language or how comfortable we feel using it.

their real mother speaks it.

My generation supported their parents financially, provided education for their children and made arrangements for their siblings and other relatives to come to this country so they could avail themselves of the opportunities here. We were the Social Security system for our families.

The Americans call us the “aliens” or “foreigners” and our children refer to us as “diz”. In case you have not heard that terminology, “diz” is an abbreviation of the Urdu word *desi* (day-see) which

means domestic or native. In other words, we are not westerners.

It's funny how some of the relatives we later brought to this country treated us as if we were backward. They tell us how to do things better as they view themselves as the "experts" on the financial, political, social and religious aspects of this country. It's almost as if they got off the boat here in the US, only to look back at the others on the ship and yell, "Damn Foreigners!" It's an issue of identity and insecurity. The real journey is finding one's self and being content with what one sees in the mirror.

My brother used to say that true contentment can only be achieved by two things: 1) Looking at those who have less than you in material things, and 2) Looking at those who have more than you in spiritual goods.

It's not that we need to point out faults in others, but looking at others opens our eyes to our own selves. Everyone's life is a lesson to be learned. The lesson I've learned is that one's identity is intimately tied to one's surroundings, be it influenced by nation, time and/or culture. Some try to run away from who they are while others cherish their time tested cultural values. Either way we need to sift the good from the bad because we are truly products of our circumstances.

It's up to every generation to leave a legacy of values to guide our children. How our children will treat us when we are old is yet to be seen. Some won't hesitate putting us in a nursing home if we *get in the way* of their work or enter-

tainment schedules. I know there are people of my generation who will give a few examples of how this is not true. Although I can't foretell the future, I am a master of the obvious and I would like to think I am a realist. Social Security

kids in Urdu, they answer back in English. Neither one of us knows for sure if the other understood what was said.

I always felt that our sermons and speeches in our religious functions are really not geared for the next generation.

We like to hear quotes in Urdu and Arabic and both are Greek to the Americans. I sensed that children come to our functions mostly to please or appease their parents. They really do not relate to the material being presented. I think some of them, if not most of them, turn their ears off until it is refreshment time. I know some would disagree with my observation but as I said earlier, I like to think I am a realist.

I also think that over the last 43 years, my English has improved. After reading these perspectives, you will appreciate how far we have come in expressing our thoughts in the English language. I know you will agree with me after I narrate the following story of a fellow student in my first semester of college. It is actually an old joke.

A foreign student fell in love with the teacher and was trying to find a way to express himself. He brought a flower and gave it to the teacher. He said, "The *smell* of this flower will fade and

die, but Miss. Johnson, you will *smell* forever."

My journey from 19th century to the 20th century has been remarkable and rewarding in many ways, thanks to God and the Land of Opportunity.

It's now up to the next generation of Muslims to define who they are, their cultural values and how they intend to combine the two as they journey onwards with their lives...Good luck with your journey into the 21st century!

◆ **Falahud Din Shams**



They tell us how to do things better as they view themselves as the "experts" on the financial, political, social and religious aspects of this country. It's almost as if they got off the boat here in the US, only to look back at the others on the ship and yell, "Damn Foreigners!" It's an issue of identity and insecurity. The real journey is finding one's self and being content with what one sees in the mirror.

system reform is crucial for the baby-boomers and it is the product of the American way of life.

I don't know how the children of our next generation would be brought up. Would they be brought up by the babysitters or the tender and loving care of their mothers? Everyone in our next generation wants to be a professional including the females; anything but a domestic person. I know they will not have a language problem with their children since both generations would speak English. We, on the other hand, still have that problem. Even when we speak to our



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